

THE VILLAGE OF HOPE.

BY RABINDRA MOHINI BOSE.



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THE VILLAGE OF HOPE



THE REV. H. E. AND MRS. PERKINS

THE
VILLAGE OF HOPE

OR

THE HISTORY OF ASRAPUR, PANJAB

BY

KHEROTH MOHINI BOSE

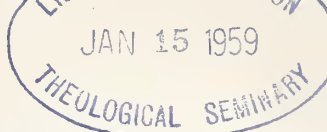
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PREFACE

IT is a great privilege to be allowed to write a word of Preface for this little history of Asrapur, "The Village of Hope," by Miss Bose. Having been for fourteen years in touch with the place, and for eight or nine of those years a regular and constant visitor and sharer in the work, one can bear one's personal witness to the wonders God has wrought.

Miss Bose rightly ascribes the success and harmony which have marked the history of Asrapur to the prayers of its Founders. Their patient prayerfulness and remarkable self-effacement were shown not only during the too short years of their actual residence there, 1888-1894, but also in the following years spent in England, longing yet unable to return, but upholding by their prayers and letters full of counsel and sympathy those who had taken over the charge of the Mission. Mr. Perkins passed to the Better Land in 1900, but Mrs. Perkins still lives to pray and work for her friends. Sundays spent so often at Asrapur live in one's memory as seasons of heavenly Sabbath rest and work. The devotion of Padri Wadhawa Mal and Miss

Bose, at first concentrated in their own district, is now being felt throughout the Central Panjab, as seen in the remarkable Mêlas, or Religious Concourses, which are yearly held there. If our first thought is *Laus Deo*, our next is "Remember them that were your guides . . . whose faith follow."

H. G. GREY.

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THE VILLAGE OF HOPE

CHAPTER I

GOD'S BUILDERS (1888-1892)

WHEN Mr. Henry Edmund Perkins left the Indian Civil Service in the year 1886, he had already given thirty years of his life to serving his earthly Sovereign in a land which had never been to him an exile country. And now, when it was time to retire and enjoy a well-earned rest in his own country, the call came to him afresh to devote the remaining years of his life to the interests of his Heavenly King for the purpose of building up the Empire of Christ.

India was already his land by birth ; he was born in Cawnpore in 1836, in the Christian settlement known as Asrapur, where his parents were in charge of the S.P.G. Mission Orphanage for Girls. India kept the first place in his heart all through his life, the idea being constantly present that it was given to Britain to win for Christ a country rich in religious aspirations and earnest search for the Infinite, if haply it might find Him.

In his early childhood he learnt to love the

orphan girls in the school, and was quite at home with them, learning to speak and read the language fluently, to eat their simple fare and thrive on it, to sit on the floor and play their games, all of which habits helped to give him in after years an unreserved and natural manner of speech and life when mixing with the people of the country, despite the formalities of an official's life. For purity of language, idiom, or facility of expression, it has seldom been our lot to find any foreigner to compare with Mr. Perkins. Even his tones, in speaking Urdu or Panjabi, were of the same quality and pitch as those of the most cultured natives of the country. He also possessed a knowledge of the classics, and had a regard for that which was good and true in the various religious systems of the country, which he had studied in books as well as in the lives of some individuals.

During his official life of thirty years he had made several friends amongst the Indian Christians of those days, and, wherever he served, he always linked himself with the missionary work and workers in his district, as so many of his predecessors had done and some of his contemporaries were doing. He lived in the exciting days when the history of Great Britain in the Panjab had still to be made, and his life brought him into intimate touch with the Builders of the new Panjab of those times—Sir Henry Lawrence, Sir Herbert Edwardes, General Reynell Taylor, and others—who, in the midst of their strenuous lives of effort to turn havoc and disorder into

peace and prosperity, still found time to promote the religious interests of the people. Varied and great, then, were the experiences of life which Mr. Perkins brought with him, when the call came to him to give up all for a new path in which to find that "the best was yet to be."

In 1886 Mr. and Mrs. Perkins joined the C.M.S. at Amritsar, and for a time helped in the evangelistic work of that place. Thirty years spent in India had taught them that the heart of the people lay in the villages where the multitudes live, and they yearned after the sheep who had no shepherd. At that time the needs of the rural population had scarcely been brought into prominence as they now have, and the work of the missionary societies was chiefly centred in towns. The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, through its energetic missionary, Miss Clay, had started various small village missions in the district of Amritsar, and established missionaries in them for evangelistic and medical work ; whilst the Church Missionary Society also possessed a few out-stations, from which many individual souls had been gathered in from time to time. But the work of instructing and building up Christians and enquirers from the depressed classes in the Amritsar district was only in its infancy. Mr. Perkins' soul yearned for these, and he also longed to come into closer intercourse with the people of the country, whom it seemed very difficult to know in the busy and comparatively reserved life of a city. When speaking of his

missionary experiences in Amritsar, he referred to that time as a failure, and he grieved that the people there had not seemed to look upon him as a real friend—"Not a single Christian ever asked me to a meal in his house, or offered me a cup of tea." The Christians, perhaps, remembering Mr. Perkins' former official position in that very city, would have considered it an impertinence to do so, and misunderstandings arose, as they so often do when dealing with foreign missionaries, from want of real knowledge of each other's desires and motives.

About that time a movement had recently begun in the Amritsar district amongst the Chuhras, one of the depressed classes, who sought to better themselves by joining the Christian Church. Whilst a certain number were in search of the loaves and fishes of Christianity, there were some who were really seekers after the Truth. An old Indian friend of Mr. Perkins, a Hindu convert, and now a *padri* of the C.M.S., became specially interested in this movement, and was led to devote himself to the work of instructing enquirers and preparing catechumens for baptism, in the face of many difficulties and hardships, not a few coming from the Indian Christian brethren, who utterly disbelieved that any good could come of this movement, and were afraid that those who might wish to enter in from the higher classes would be effectually hindered. It was strange indeed that a man of Mr. Perkins' nature, and of his attainments, should give himself

heart and soul to the same work as his friend, the Rev. Dina Nath, and decide to make the work of shepherding some of those scattered sheep in the villages, who had been gathered into the fold, his great aim.

The Rev. Dina Nath was teaching and preaching in a large village called Ajnala, where Miss Clay, of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, had long had her headquarters, and where she planned, and in some measure carried out, her purpose of forming a chain of mission stations to reach every part of the Amritsar district, which, if small in extent compared with some districts, is more densely populated than almost any in the Province, for only four of the thirty-one districts of the Province can show a larger total population.

The interest of this portion of the Panjab lies chiefly in its intimate connexion with the rise of the Sikh religion and power. It has always been an agricultural tract, peopled by the ancestors of the Jats, who are the peasant proprietors of the present time, and are Sikhs or Mohammedans by religion.

Mr. and Mrs. Perkins were invited to settle down in a part of the Ajnala *Tahsil*, which touches the Tarn Taran *Tahsil*. Almost at the borderland of these two *Tahsils* they found an old unused site, close upon the Bari Doab canal, which they purchased from the Government, and to this plot they gave the loved name of Asrapur. It was within five minutes' walk from the village of

Bahrwal, and about four miles from the railway-station of Atari, a large village on the Grand Trunk Railway, halfway between Amritsar and Lahore. Atari is a picturesque-looking village, and, as its name denotes, contains massive and lofty houses, resembling a fortress with high towers, so that it has been called by some the Panjabi Windsor. It is famous in Sikh history, being intimately connected with the rise and progress of the Sikh commonwealth from its earliest period, and especially as being the home of the famous Sikh General, Sardar Sham Singh, who died fighting against the English in the battle of Subraon. He had vowed not to come home alive if the Khalsa were defeated, and when he found the battle going against him he fought with renewed vigour, while all around him were flying, knowing that defeat was sure. He would give his life as a sacrifice to the Guru's cause, he said, to win a martyr's crown. Clad in white, and riding a white horse, fighting against fearful odds, he fell. The story goes that the horse returned riderless to Atari, and the young and beautiful wives of the Sardar did not even wait to hear the news of their husband's death confirmed, but gave their lives up in *sati* at once. There is a *samadh* (mausoleum) outside the town of Atari, as one drives to the village of Asrapur, which speaks of the devoted human love of those who, having missed the knowledge of a greater Love, gladly laid their lives down, not caring for anything that life could yield, when

the lord and master no longer shared their joys. It is the last *sati* known in the written annals of the Panjab. The unwritten *satis* who can tell, the life-long deaths of many we see around us ! Such is the thought that comes to us each time we go past the tombs of Sham Singh Atariwala and his wives.

It was in the year 1888 that Mr. and Mrs. Perkins were often to be found itinerating in the neighbourhood of Atari, and while they tended the lambs and sheep of the fold, they lost no opportunity of making friends amongst all classes of the villagers they met, who knew them well by name, because of their official connexion with the district.

In writing of that time of beginnings, we quote a few words of Mrs. Perkins describing how they started on their work in the place which afterwards became their home. " We had our hopes, doubts and difficulties. The hopes were strong that enabled us, in advanced life, to embark on a work so new to us. Doubts arose as we realised our inexperience and somewhat isolated position, and difficulties as we failed at first to gain the confidence of the villagers. Time and strength were much occupied by worries inseparable from house-building.

" Amongst the encouragements, first and foremost was the raising up of helpers, who came to us from unexpected quarters and in unexpected ways ; the increasing friendliness of the villagers, due in great part to the medical work ; and the great joy of seeing souls gathered in. Truly it

was the Lord's doing and 'marvellous in our eyes.' "

The chosen site had been known to the villagers as a spot haunted by evil spirits and demons. The people still describe to us how they used to see by night curious phenomena of sparks and volcanic jets rising from that piece of waste land, and even by day the bravest soul shrank from making a short cut across the deserted plot, so certain was he of suffering from the emissaries of the evil one, the *churels*, *balas*, and *bhuts*, evil spirits which frequented the place. It was a time of great astonishment and excitement when they saw a few white tents pitched in the heart of that terrible spot; they used to sit on roofs and watch the comings and goings of the white-haired *Mem Sahib* and the strong-looking *Sahib*, and village discussion grew long and hot on the possibilities of evil awaiting these good, kind people, if they stayed on in the haunted place. They were on the look-out for an early disappearance. This was in the winter months of 1888, but in the spring of 1889, though the *Sahib* and the *Mem Sahib*, with their occasional English friends, had left, there grew up a little settlement, chiefly of Chuhra servants and labourers, and later a bungalow, so they knew that the English folk would come back again; but they could not understand the motives of any who were foolish enough to live in a place possessing so evil a reputation. The villagers love to tell us tales of those days, always ending up with the



C.M.S. HOUSE, BUILT BY REV. H. E. PERKINS, OCCUPIED BY C.E.Z.M.S. LADIES

trite Panjabi saying, “ Lo, the *jangal* has become *mangal* (gladness), and the *Kalar* a *Kaul* (barren soil, a cup of cold water).”

While Mr. and Mrs. Perkins were spending the summer months in England, a kind friend in Amritsar, Mrs. Grime (now entered into rest), made weekly journeys in all weathers over rough roads to set their house, which was being built, in order, and to her energetic care it was due that everything was ready when they took possession in December 1889. They were accompanied by a young missionary, Miss Worsfold, the first of a band of English ladies who from time to time lived and worked in the closest union with their Indian fellow-workers for the good of their village sisters. Then came a period of organising work which had been started during occasional visits the year before ; for that purpose the Founder cast himself in earnest prayer upon the God who knows all hearts to send the chosen workers.

His method was Scriptural: he prayed, in some cases for years, before the right worker was given, and he never despised the humblest help. Both Mr. and Mrs. Perkins had the inspiring gift of a generous appreciation of those around them; the unstinting sympathy and love which they gave to all their fellow-labourers helped greatly in uniting the whole band, and each one tried to be worthy of the confidence bestowed. The first band of workers was from amongst the poor despised Chuhra, but these three were not

altogether raw or untrained material. All of them had been religious teachers and leaders amongst their own people, so the qualities for leadership were already present in some degree. To develop and lead these qualities aright was Mr. Perkins' first aim, and he was often found teaching them, by word and example, that only those who are willing to learn humbly are fitted to serve wisely. He taught them not to despise manual work, and was often seen digging in the garden and carpentering, helping in little ways about the house, assisted by the small band of Christians, so that in a very real sense they began to look upon him as a fellow-labourer.

Mr. Perkins had a deep love for Nature; flowers, plants, and the ordinary animal life within and around the settlement, all brought to him so many illustrations for imparting telling lessons to the minds of his simple companions. He had a gift for symbolising and illustrating in the real Oriental style, which greatly attracted the people to him. His tenderness for children went far to appeal to the hearts of these Eastern parents, to whom the love of their children is the greatest of God's good gifts, and has kept many from falling away from the practical knowledge of God's Fatherhood, even when their creed has clouded this conception. As Mr. Perkins went to visit a village in company with these simple fellow-workers, he would talk to them of the plant and animal life around them, or of the sun and sky, and draw them out in conversation,

so that their minds should receive and retain impressions which would help them in their daily life. Sometimes in the fields or by a tree, before going into the village, they would stand for a few moments in silent meditation, and there would rise a short prayer from one or another for a blessing upon that day's message. The naturalness of his prayer-life deeply impressed all who knew him.

One of these three teachers had been a *chela*, or disciple, of a Sikh *guru*, and knew the *garanth*s (Sikh Scriptures) by heart. He was of an extraordinarily proud disposition when first seen by Mr. Perkins, in the year 1888, during an itinera-tion in the Ajnala district. It was in a Chuhra *Dharm sala* (religious rest-house), in which he had been installed as the religious head for six years, that he was first met. He had been a *Sadhu*, or religious devotee, for eighteen years, having re-nounced his family ties, including wife and children. Mr. Perkins' manner of greeting was thus : " Babaji, may I sit down near you ? "

He replied : " What good shall I receive from you if you do ? "

" I want greatly to know what led you to become a *Sadhu*, and whether you have found what you sought ? "

" I have found full satisfaction." Though, even as the *Sadhu* said this, he knew that his heart denied it utterly. The *Padri* sat down, in spite of the grudgingly given invitation, and talked for an hour and a half, leaving behind him two

tracts in Gurmukhi, named "*Injil sar*" and "*Isa Nikalank*" ("Jesus the Spotless One"), asking him to compare their teaching with that of his *Guru*. And each day of Mr. Perkins' stay in the neighbourhood found him by the side of the disagreeable rude Sadhu, speaking to him in all meekness and love of what true *gujan* (knowledge), *shanti* (peace), and *mukti* (deliverance and salvation) brought to the sinner in his daily life and practice.

When Mr. Perkins left, the Sadhu began to feel the torments of a self-knowledge, which had never been his before; the contrast of his life, as a leader of religion, with that of the other teacher—who had come to him in such humility and love, and whose words and manner had left an impression he could not efface, much as he desired to—was apparent to his unwilling mind. As he read the tract, "*Isa Nikalank*," the life of the "Spotless" Jesus stood out before him, and his heart cried out what his lips dared not say as yet, "Never man lived as this Man." Many weeks had passed, when one night he dreamed that he was in the Amritsar church, a place he had often passed on his visits to the Golden Temple. When he woke up he was impelled by some outside power to wend his way to the city of Amritsar, several miles away. It was Sunday morning, and he found himself standing outside the church porch, where he was accosted by a man who said, "Brother, why not come in?" The Sadhu entered, and for a time was bewildered

by the strangeness of the scene around him, the number of women and girls amongst the worshippers, the devout attitude and silence of them all; but presently he forgot everything in the voice which fell upon his ear, and held him as if it would never let him go again. It was the voice of the Padri who had visited him, and who had turned his assured sense of peace and security into a state of restlessness and utter despair. As he listened, a quiet fell upon his wretchedness and seemed to bring a little respite of calm, for he heard the wonderful words which have spoken peace to countless hearts since the time when the Persecutor became the Apostle of Christ: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." The Sadhu believed that it was about him that the Padri spoke, and when the service was over, he went straight up to him, saying, "I am here, a Christian now, and will come to you soon." He went home, for he had many things to settle. The giving up of the *Dharmshala*, where he had received the reverent devotion of many followers, was no small effort to him, as was also the going forth to new scenes and strange people, where not a single friend of the past was to be near him; to live he did not know how or where was now his chosen lot.

In looking back upon the life-stories of many of those who have so resolutely turned their backs on the things behind, and their faces towards an utterly strange and unknown future, we surely

often forget the cost to them of such a step. We see the cost of it, perhaps, to a man who has had to give up his caste, wealth, and all that the world calls good, but we fail to see that there is any great sacrifice for one who has no caste to give up, or who has no property or wealth to leave behind. And yet, to such an one, too, there is a considerable cost in leaving all the associations of his past life behind, and in losing all touch with near relations and friends, especially in India, where the family life and the community life so completely absorb into themselves the unit and the individual. Such a man or woman feels the solitary life intensely, and it is the duty of the congregation, of which he becomes a member, to emphasise his part in their community life from the first, and so fulfil to him the promise made by the Master—surely for such—that “There is no man which hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands.” The promise of the Master remains true, but there has been a sad lack in the past on the part of those who ought to have been brothers and sisters, fathers, mothers and children, in fulfilling their share, and many converts have gone the poorer all their lives, while some have utterly fallen away.

We return to the Sadhu, and find him entering the “Village of Hope,” on a Sunday morning,

for the first time. A service is being held in the open air, and there is a great crowd of men and women seated on the grass. The Padri is praying, and near him are two of his fellow-labourers, one an aged man, Wasawa Das, of whom we shall hear more later. As the Sadhu seats himself beside this servant of Christ, the Padri is heard reverently speaking to the God whom he worships : " Thy service is perfect kingship," as the Panjabi rendering is. Scales seem to fall from his eyes, and the Sadhu begins to realise what the joy and freedom of serving God mean. It is not a giving up, it is not a continual effort to deaden self and all desire, but it is being lifted from the dunghill to be set up as a prince—for God had chosen him to be a king and priest for evermore.

From that day to this he has remained at Asrapur, and is now the oldest worker there. He is loved and honoured, and is blessed in his efforts to win others for the Guru Whom he delights to serve. Old and feeble, and blind these many years, his faith is like a clear shining after rain ; his very weaknesses have been made a strength to him ; blind, but giving sight ; feeble, but helping to make others strong. The Padri, before baptising the Sadhu, sent him back to his own village to fetch his wife and children. His old mother also joined the party, and she, though once the most bigoted of all, became the most eager and quick to discern the things of God.

The Padri loved symbolism as a means of impressing the simple minds of his hearers, and

on the occasion of the baptism of the Sadhu and his family, he had a table placed in the middle of the small canal flowing by the side of the settlement, on which he stood in his surplice. On the farther bank stood the family of catechumens, who were immersed one by one in the flowing water, and allowed to emerge on the opposite bank, where stood a band of Christian brethren ready to receive them as members of the household of Christ. A sermon was then preached on the dying unto sin and living unto righteousness.

I have given a lengthy account of this one fellow-worker, because we are able to trace the work of God through his servant, the Founder, in the life-history of a soul brought out from the darkness of sin into the light of the Gospel, and also in order that we may take courage and be hopeful for all who are truly seeking to find God, according to their various lights, for "If any man willeth to do His will, He shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God," even as this one followed on to know the Lord. Other fellow-workers were given to the Founders in answer to patient waiting upon God. Miss Worsfold was there already; the writer joined the home-life of the Founders early in 1890, and has been there ever since. A Biblewoman next joined the circle, for work among the hospital women. All this time Mr. Perkins was asking the Lord in prayer for a man who would share the responsibility of his pastoral and evangelistic work. The present



THE MISSION STAFF, 1892



ASRAPUR DISPENSARY

pastor, the Rev. Wadhawa Mal, first came to the village of Asrapur in 1890, during his period of studentship at St. John's Divinity College, Lahore, to act as pastor while Mr. Perkins was away in the hot weather. Mr. Perkins writes: "The good Providence of God sent our dear friend, Wadhawa Mal, to reside here during my absence in the hills, and to carry on such work as his little leisure permitted. He assiduously taught the residents, and the good effects of his care were distinctly visible on our return." And later: "Another most cheering outlook is the prospect of the appointment of the honoured fellow-labourer, who has twice held charge of the Mission during the hot season, permanently to this post. . . . It is proposed that he should come in the first instance as assistant to the missionary, and after ordination, for which he has been recommended by the C.M.S. Conference, he will be ready to assume *full charge of the Mission whenever this may become necessary.*" We specially note the last sentence, to show how fully Mr. Perkins, in the choice of a helper, looked forward to training him for increasing responsibility. He was ever preparing for a time when the Indian Church would fit itself for the work of evangelising, as well as of shepherding those gathered in. He took time and infinite pains in the selection of workers, and gave to them without measure from his own treasured experiences. He never made undue haste to carry on a work, but waited for the right help in quietness and confidence, until

he received assurance from above. For the pastor he had waited and prayed two long years ; for another worker he fasted and prayed, before asking her to remain as a permanent member of the band of helpers, when she had been a temporary volunteer. All the workers were not invariably successes : at that time there was, at least, one who gave much anxiety, and had to be sent away because of grave charges against his character, happily before there had been time to work any lasting evil. Mr. Perkins' long association with the people of the country in the capacity of a magistrate gave him an insight into character ; humbugs were instinctively discerned, and he was not taken in by glibness and cant. Mr. and Mrs. Perkins had a faculty for keeping the workers together, and those who visited Asrapur in the years 1890 to 1893 will remember how the life seemed more like that of a family than a community, every interest of the individuals finding response and sympathy in the Heads. In 1891 a small school was started for the sons of Christians who had been gathered in from the neighbourhood. Mr. Perkins lived much with the boys, teaching them Scripture, making the Bible stories live again in his vivid way. He would take them out for walks at times, not in parties, but in twos and threes, for his teaching was essentially individual.

By this time there was a small dispensary in the village, to which the women at first came with much fear and trepidation, but after a time with greater confidence and fearlessness. Here

Mrs. Perkins was to be found daily, singing and reading to the out-patients, loving the little children and substantially helping the poor people with more than medicine. And when the day's work was over, groups of village women would be seen wending their way to the Bungalow, which was as open to all comers as were the hearts of the occupants. They would be entertained by Mrs. Perkins in the sitting-room, which was also the dining-room of the house, whilst Mr. Perkins might be heard behind the curtain, which divided the room from his study, working away at his typewriter, translating parts of the Scriptures into Urdu or Panjabi or revising them. At any moment when the village ladies became inquisitive enough to search out the cause of the strange sounds, and to peep behind the screen, he was ready to show them the working of his machine, or to talk to them about themselves or their children, leading them to the best things. The "heart at leisure from itself" was to be found in that little home at Asrapur. In 1892 the work amongst women was further strengthened by the arrival of Miss Grace Cooper (now Mrs. Coverdale), who was free for the outside evangelistic work in the villages, as well as for teaching the enquirers and newly baptised Christians. She came with a good knowledge of the language, a strong and vigorous frame, and an untiring zeal for reaching the villagers. She had spent nearly eight years in missionary work in Amritsar and its neighbourhood, and readily found an entrance into the village homes,

many of which had been visited by Mrs. Perkins and Miss Worsfold. Besides this, Miss Cooper and Miss Worsfold helped in teaching the small children and Christian boys in the compound. For the greater part of the winter they would be out in camp with Mr. and Mrs. Perkins, reaching the distant villages, where men and women, who otherwise would not have heard the Gospel, gladly visited the camp, though they would not have gone near the missionaries' house, "deterred," as Mr. Perkins said, "by their notions of English exclusiveness and of our distance from the national social life."

The year 1892 saw a real advance in the growth of the settlement. Besides the buildings in Asrapur, a rest-house had been erected at Kasil, a distant out-station, where several families had been gathered in, which made visits to the newly founded Church much easier; also another village Church had been commenced, in a different direction, on land as freely and gladly given by non-Christian friends as that at Kasil. The number of Christians had grown to two hundred and thirty, several having been added during the year. The first Confirmation was held in January 1891 by Bishop Matthew, and on the same day a little plot of ground was set apart as God's acre. He writes: "I earnestly pray that the Confirmation to-day may be the first of a series marking the gradual extension and deepening of the work among these village people." In this interval there had been two interesting

ordinations, the first that of Mr. Perkins as priest in 1890, the second, in December, 1892 that of Mr. Wadhawa Mal as deacon.

The patients treated in the hospital had increased from a few hundreds to over nine thousand in 1892 ; the work was recognised by the district Board, and a monthly grant of Rs.20 sanctioned. Helpful friends, both in England and India, supplied the various needs of clothing and appliances for the sick, whilst the Founder of the Mission himself bore the entire cost of medicines and food. The people gradually learned to contribute gifts in kind, such as grain, cotton wool, milk and fuel, a custom which has grown into a very substantial complement to the voluntary subscriptions and Mission grant. In writing of this period we are reminded of Mr. Perkins' report of 1892, where he says : " While we cannot but bewail some defections from our flock, it is our privilege to make mention of the loving-kindness of the Lord in a marked spiritual delicacy of apprehension, love of prayer, growth in humility and other unusual graces in many converts. One dare not give particulars, but the Saviour whom these humble souls seek and love knows them all and will declare them in due course."

CHAPTER II

WASAWA DAS, A BOND-SERVANT OF
JESUS CHRIST (1891)

AMONGST the small band of fellow-workers, the first and foremost from the earliest days of the Mission was one Wasawa Das, whom the Founders loved and honoured greatly. In more than one report of the work, we find Mr. Perkins writing of him as "the true founder of this Mission and originator of all the Christian work hereabouts." Mrs. Perkins tells us that it was through the earnest request of two men who had been baptised from amongst the lower classes that she and her husband first heard the call to go and live amongst the newly-baptised Christians in the Amritsar district, to which they responded by settling at Asrapur. Wasawa Das was one of the two men, and he was a Chuhra.

It is a well-known fact that the Chuhras are amongst the outcast population of India, but only comparatively few have taken the trouble to study the simple, hardy people who have contributed so largely, and for so many centuries, to the well-being of the higher classes, serving

them with a patient, whole-hearted loyalty, and contented to receive very little in return. At the present time of transition in the country, a growing discontent has begun amongst the Chuhras, together with a desire to rise in the social scale, which has become possible for them owing to labour having grown in value. The Chuhra is no longer entirely dependent on the farmer; he has many other better opportunities for improving his condition, and he has not been slow to benefit by those which the British Government has brought him. His greatest chance of emancipation has come to him through a change of religion, and of late years there has been a steadily increasing number anxious to be taught the truth of the Christian religion, and to be formally admitted into the Christian Church. But Christianity has not been the only religion that has opened its doors to outcasts, for Islam has always shown itself ready to proselytise wherever it has gone, and in the Panjab alone it comprises over 226,000 Chuhra converts, a not unimportant proportion for Islam, as the total number of Chuhras is about 950,000. But while Islam, in scores of years, has failed to uplift the depressed class, Christianity has been a transforming power in less than the lifetime of one generation. This fact has not been lost on the Chuhra, and has been one cause of the various mass movements we see around us in the Central Panjab.

The origin of the Chuhras is not definitely known. It is believed by some good authorities

that they are not an aboriginal race, whom the Aryans reduced to a state of serfdom, as some of the other depressed classes seem to be, but that they are of the same Aryan stock, their features and physique being of the same type, the darker complexion being due to exposure and hard outdoor work. Amongst the Chuhras many legends exist explaining their origin, the most generally accepted being variations of the following story: In the time of the Pandawas and Kaurawas there were four Brahman brothers. It so happened that one of their cows died, and the youngest brother was compelled by the three older ones to drag away the carcase, which he did with his bow, on condition that he should be taken back into the family on the fourth day. The brothers did not keep their word, but cast him off instead, telling him that three days stood for three ages, and that the fourth age would see him reinstalled. Strangely enough it is now the fourth age of the Hindu cycle, and perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, this curious prophecy is stirring up the Chuhra to look around and find his deliverance nigh. The outcast brother is supposed to be the ancestor of Lal Beg, Balmik and Bala, the patron saints of the Chuhras.

The Chuhras can hardly be said to possess a system of religion or creed: whatever beliefs they hold are of a negative character, and they easily adopt the rites, superstitions, or phraseology of their masters, Hindus, Sikhs, or Moslems, as the case may be, but for census purposes in the

Amritsar district they generally put themselves down as Hindus. Their definite beliefs consist in regarding the patron saints as *autars*, or incarnations, and looking upon them as mediators between God and man. They cannot say what Balmik has done for his followers, but they believe that he will stand up for them before God in the day of judgment. They confess to a belief in sin, in the resurrection of the body, and in rewards and punishments. They have a strong belief in spirits, and are very superstitious. Their shrine is called a *Bala Shah*, and consists of a mound of earth fashioned "like a cow's tail," which stands in the *Thatti*, the Chuhras' quarter of a town or village. It is dedicated by one of their priests with considerable ceremony, though in these days a good many rites have been given up. When the earth is heaped up into a mound, the priest buries in it a gold knife, a silver knife, and a copper knife—symbolising the past ages of the world—as well as the head of a goat and a cocoa-nut, all wrapped in a piece of red cloth. The mound is then levelled and made tidy, and a little altar is made of earth, with three niches for lamps; incense is burned, a dish of sweets distributed, and the congregation sprinkled with some water into which silver or gold has been placed, after which a dedicatory song is sung by the priest or his disciples. Each stanza is an ode to the various ages, i.e. the golden age, the silver age, the copper age, and the earthen age, ending with the following beautiful refrain :

“Bring the keys and open the door of the temple,
See the face of the True Master,
Until God has come in the offering
The sacrifice is not consecrated, oh believers.
Say, believers all are saved.”—YOUNGSON.

The Chuhras themselves, when asked what comfort they receive from their religion, reply: “Our Bala is a mound of earth himself. What has he done for us but level us to the same dust?”

In places where they have not come into contact with the good tidings of that Gospel which speaks liberty to the captive, it is pitiful to find how despairing they are of the possibility of anything good being for them. Especially do we find the women steeped in degrading customs and rites, and their ideas of morals are very low. Though their marriage rites are much the same as those of their neighbours around, their customs are far more lax, and a divorce is not necessary to cancel the relationship with a wife; she can at any time be cast off for another. The women also do not consider themselves as much bound to their husbands as do the women belonging to other religions; we find them leaving their children and husbands, and running off elsewhere to live with other men. In not a few cases, when Chuhra families have been prepared for baptism, we find the husband and wife have never been through any legal ceremony of marriage, and have to be married as well as baptised as Christians.

Their superstitions are legion; it is impossible



CANAL NEAR THE VILLAGE OF ASRAPUR

to come to a conclusive knowledge of any but the most common ones. It is the women who chiefly keep up their religious and superstitious rites. Every Thursday, being the days for *Pirs* and *Faqirs* (Mohammedan origin), the candles are lighted in Bala Shah's niche, a meal offering is placed on the altar, a portion of which is brought home and distributed to the children by way of averting evil influences, and at night they pray for the dead, but they have no secret rites. They offer sacrifices to Bala Shah, generally of a fowl or a goat, and sometimes of a cow. The sacrifice is offered at a little distance from the shrine, and is cooked and then eaten by all present.

A child, if a son, is brought on the twenty-first day after birth and formally presented to Balmik at the shrine, and incense is offered. Evil spirits may attach themselves to dwelling-houses, or wells, or to animals, who then turn upon man and injure him. Barren fields are said to be haunted. Ancestor-worship is not unknown. The spirits of the dead are to be dreaded, especially those of women who died before the birth of a child. Such spirits are called *churels*, and many precautions are taken to prevent the spirit from leaving the corpse, such as filling up the eyes with cayenne pepper to destroy sight, driving nails into the floor when she has died and again when she is burnt, piercing the feet with iron pins, so as to prevent the dead from returning to plague the succeeding wife.

The women do not take the name of their

husbands nor of the caste to which they belong. They generally bury their dead, but in Hindu and Sikh villages they cremate, after the fashion of their masters. They have no rites for initiating others into their religion; eating together is sufficient. Many Chuhras practise the black art, and exorcise evil spirits from persons or animals who are suffering from their influence. The subject is seated in front of the exorcist, who waves a scythe or a piece of straw in front of his eyes, until he falls into a state of ecstasy and calls out the name of the evil spirit by which he is possessed. The exorcist asks for a fowl or goat, on which the patient places his hand; the victim is then slain and the spirit propitiated. There are many other ways of exorcising a spirit; the underlying motive in all cases seems to be to create a counter-suggestion and free the patient's mind of the previous idea. Hypnotism is the master-trade of these so-called sorcerers, and they seem to succeed in many cases when our limited treatment by drugs in the out-patient room has failed to relieve. The Chuhras possess no literature, but have a collection of legends and traditions which have been handed down from generation to generation in a sort of rough Panjabi doggerel.

The original occupation of the Chuhras was that of tanners, on which account they are held in aversion by their Hindu neighbours, and are forced to live outside the villages. They eat carrion, which further tends to make them

detestable to their neighbours. At the present time they are landless field-labourers. There are even castes amongst them, and certain things prohibited to one in the way of food are permissible to another. Some will not eat the egg-plant, others will not touch anything roasted on the fire. One caste will not eat hedgehogs, because their founder, when a child, slept beside one. There are Brahmans amongst them, who act as their priests, but their origin is unknown. From personal observation it can be said that they are more intelligent, and possess a more refined and attractive exterior than the others, as well as a physique more like the Sikh Jat.

They have a very real belief in and dread of the evil eye, it being more often than not attributed to women. If the person who suffers from the effects of this malign look asks for a morsel of food from the possessor of the evil eye, and eats it, a cure is the result. Cows are often said to be influenced by the evil eye, and give no milk ; a similar food is mixed into their fodder and they are freed from the influence.

To sum up, the Chuhra, on account of his low social position, is handicapped in the race of life ; there is nothing on earth to help to raise him, nor has he any vision of a heaven or a higher life to uplift him. Until quite recently he was hemmed in by a barrier, which not only severed him from his fellow-men, but also from anything which could rouse his spiritual or mental faculties. "Beasts we are, and beasts we shall remain," is

the burden of their cry. To such now in the last days has come a message of hope, and, if we desire to see miracles in our times, we have only to visit some of the despised *Thatthis*, or sweeper quarters, to see the transforming power of Christ* in many of the lives lived there. To some of us, who live and work amongst these people, comes a vision of the proud races of India, with their old religions, being undermined and laid low by the ingathering of a people who were nought in themselves, but who are beginning to be a wonder and a secret source of envy to those who cannot understand their changed and ennobled lives. Even now amongst the wondering neighbours, some there are who, seeing the change, give God the praise, and are led to ask or desire like blessings for themselves.

Wasawa Das, the old teacher at Asrapur, was one of these chosen by God to make foolish the wisdom of the world. It is of him that Mr. Perkins wrote in 1892: "In the village of Chainpur (Abode of rest), seventy years ago, a little boy was born in a Chuhra family. He grew up as other sweeper youths, but with a strong conscientiousness of character, as was stated by a heathen who had known him when a hard-working and careful cow-herd. Up to his light he was a worshipper of God, and in due time, dissatisfied with the negations of Balmik worship, he adopted the rôle of a *Gulabdasi Faqir*. A *Gulabdasi* is known throughout the district to be an Antinomian of the worst type. Professing himself to be

a divinity, the *Gulabdasi Faqir* accepts divine honours and considers himself above law. Truly it is, as the Panjab proverb expresses it, "*Nim Ka paiwand Karele par*," or in English, "To graft colocynth upon wormwood." But even here the wonderful love of the Lord, whom Wasawa Das served so dimly, kept him from the worst excesses of his creed, and fulfilled in him the Apostle's words that "In every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

The scene must now be changed to the great Diwali Feast (Feast of Lanterns) and cattle fair held in Amritsar in the year 1886. There at the preaching-tent a man named Jawahir Das, a Chuhra *Faqir*, heard the everlasting good news, and received some tracts; these he carried to his village of Dhanoi, in the borders of the Lahore district, to share with his cousin Wasawa Das, who also could read Gurmukhi. They heard the word gladly, and received it, and after instruction were baptised in 1887 by the Rev. Mian Sadiq, pastor of Ajnala. By a chain of Providential arrangements, the Rev. Dina Nath was led at that time to give himself up to the work of teaching and upbuilding a number of Chuhras, who were coming in with a desire to profess Christ, and under his deeply spiritual teaching and example the germs of a truly Christlike life grew and bore fruit abundantly in the heart of Wasawa Das. In later days, when his teacher had departed to be with Christ, he often dwelt upon the loveliness

of his spiritual father's life, of which he could never speak without tears. To him, Padri Dina Nath was always "Ustad Sahib," the teacher. From December 1888, Wasawa Das was a fellow-labourer and as a dear brother to us, and now that he is beyond the reach of any harm resulting from the publication of a simple narration of his character and work, I feel constrained to tell how God once more chose a despised sinner for the doing of His work.

He died as he lived, simply trusting in the Saviour, looking upon the coming change as a fresh proof of the tender love of his Lord. He was ill only a few days, and was tenderly nursed through the days and nights by his faithful friends, Mr. and Mrs. Perkins, and the other workers. During that time, though suffering much from the breathlessness of pneumonia, he spoke to all around him of the things that were nearest his heart. To one: "Mind you learn to read, never be ashamed to bring others to Christ." To another, who was weeping by his bedside: "Sister, I have no worldly wealth; I cannot leave you anything, but we shall have a grand entertainment in heaven." He asked for every picture and text to be removed from the walls of his sick-room, excepting the picture of the Good Shepherd. He felt no anxiety for his wife and children, committing them to the love of a faithful Father and to the care of his best friends—the Founders; and as quietly as a little child falls asleep in its mother's arms, so the aged evangelist—the friend of all—fell asleep

in his Father's keeping. In May 1891, only a few months before his death, the little cemetery where he was laid to rest had been set apart as a resting-place. Little did we know that the first to be laid there would be one who took a reverent part in that service. Only nine days before his death he had joined with us in his last earthly public service, to commemorate the Ascension of his Lord, and now he was in His very Presence, and had ascended to the true Chainpur, the abode of rest.

The essence of Wasawa Das' teaching was the love of the true *Guru* to His disciples. Whatever subject he took for his discourse, he invariably ended up with the narrative of the Master washing the feet of His disciples. His message was acceptable to many, and he was instrumental in bringing many sheep into the fold. Some of these fell away after the death of their loved teacher. Mr. Perkins, in writing of what seemed an irreparable loss to the Mission, adds: "Perhaps it was in the will of God that some who had accepted Christianity from personal love to Wasawa Das, who have now fallen away, should be made manifest, and that we all should be taught to cease more and more from man." There are others, however, who are still standing steadfast in the faith, the fruit of his many tears and prayers, to assure us that those who "go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them."

Wasawa Das' wife followed him some years

later, full of a living faith. His three sons, who were educated at Asrapur, are now working as medical assistants in medical missions. His only daughter is married to a Christian worker, and is herself a Bible-teacher to the women of a C.M.S. settlement of Christians. In the little plot, known as God's acre, close to the "Village of Hope," a humble mound marks the resting-place of this faithful follower, at the head of which stands a plain, black cross, bearing in letters of white the words: "Here sleepeth Wasawa Das, the bond-servant of Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH OF THE NEW BIRTH (1893)

ONE of the first buildings to be put up in the new Settlement, even before the bungalow was built, and while the Founders were still living in tents, was a temporary wooden church. As long ago as 1879 the Rev. W. Keene, a C.M.S. missionary of Amritsar, had built a portable wooden tent, called a *Khaima Chobi*. His intention was to move it from place to place, and to use it as a dwelling-house as well as a preaching hall. This, however, did not prove a success, perhaps because it was too unwieldy. After that it stood for some years in the courtyard of the Rev. Sahib Dyal's private house in Amritsar, and was used by him as a place for meeting enquirers and friends. In 1889 it was given by the Rev. T. R. Wade to Mr. Perkins, to use in place of a church in the new Settlement of Asrapur. This little unpretentious building had come to be a Bethel to many who realised that they had first, consciously, met God there. Two confirmations had been held in it by Bishop Matthew: on the first occasion, several candidates were brought by the Rev. E. Guilford from Tarn

Taran for a conjoint service, so that the connexion with the sister church in that town dates back to the earliest year of the Asrapur Mission, and succeeding years have only strengthened the tie. Many baptisms, too, have taken place in the wooden church.

No small wonder, then, that the hearts of the Founders clung to the simple little tabernacle, and their desire was to worship in no other all the remaining days of their ministry. The conviction, however, was growing on them that for Feast days a larger place was greatly needed, though they shrank from fixing any time when the change should be made. They were not long left in doubt, for one wintry morning, early in 1893, a sad sight met their eyes: the little church stood battered and broken down, an unsightly ruin! Storm and flood during the night had done their work well; there was no question of restoring it. We could not help looking on it as the passing away of a good and faithful friend, which, having accomplished its purpose, left many happy memories of "how amiable are God's tabernacles."

Only a few days after the fall of the church, Asrapur received a visit from Mr. (now Dr.) Eugene Stock, Editorial Secretary of the C.M.S., who was visiting India, and he was asked to lay the foundation stone of a new church. He writes in the Log Book: "I have been privileged and honoured, for an honour it was indeed, to lay the foundation stone of a new church, the first time in my life that I have performed such



THE OLD CHURCH



THE CHURCH OF THE NEW BIRTH, 1893

a function. The little unpretending procession of the congregation, the singing of a native hymn, and their gathering round the stone will never be forgotten by me, and I do pray to God to make them all living stones in His spiritual temple. Dear Mr. and Mrs. Perkins have settled down among the people, and by their loving earnestness and exceeding simplicity of life—a most attractive feature—are doing a work which indeed calls for thanksgiving.” The Rev. R. Clark, Secretary of the C.M.S., Amritsar, writes: “The temporary little church has fallen down, and is to be replaced by a larger and more permanent building. The spiritual fabric is being enlarged also, as old things pass away and all things in this land become new. May all things be of God.”

The special Litany on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone was written in Panjabi by Mr. Perkins, of which the following is a translation, also by him:

“O Lord, Who hast founded Thy Church on a foundation so sure that none can break it, namely Christ Himself, we beseech Thee to pour out Thy blessing on this our work of to-day. Amen.

“Grant that in this church Thine everlasting Gospel may be ever fully and faithfully proclaimed. Amen.

“Grant that those who may be here baptised may receive from Thee the spiritual washing, and may become pure and clean. Amen.

“Grant that those who may be married here may be joined together by Thy holy hand. Amen.

“Grant that those who praise Thee in this place may offer to Thee their praise with a pure heart. Amen.

“Grant that those who pray in this place may pray ‘in spirit and in truth.’ Amen.

“Grant that in this place the sorrowful may be comforted and the weak strengthened. Amen.

“Grant that in this place obdurate sinners may be restrained and backsliders reclaimed. Amen.

“Grant that holy and humble men may be its ministers, and pure and faithful women its deaconesses. Amen.

“Accept this our offering, and crown it with success from Thine own presence, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

The Litany having been read, the stone was laid by Mr. Stock, who gave an address full of feeling and truth, pointing out how we, gathered from many strata of society, are all built up as spiritual stones in the heavenly temple, just as bricks, stones, and mortar are collected from divers places into one firm and united edifice. At the close of the address, Psalms cxxvii and cxxviii were recited, and a Panjabi hymn, bringing out the truth that Christ is the Shepherd and Protector of His Church, was sung. The service was concluded with a blessing, and *gur* (raw sugar, like molasses) was distributed all round, because without it no such ceremony of dedication would be considered by the villagers to be complete.

Within a few months from the time of laying the foundation the new church was finished and in use.

It was large enough to seat about one hundred and sixty persons on the floor; there were no pews, and no decorations. It was Mr. Perkins' desire that the church should be an outward expression of its living members, and suit their simple, humble ways. It was built of *pakha* brick (kiln-baked) and mortar; the exterior was like an ordinary church, and a simple stone cross stood in the place of a steeple.

On October 26th, 1893, a large number of village Christians mingled with a good many of the Founders' English and Indian friends from the neighbouring towns to share in the great joy of dedicating the house built unto God. The remembrance of that day is still vividly preserved in the memory of some of us who were present at what seemed the climax to a beautiful chapter of ministry. As we look back upon this gathering together of some of the friends of those days, we remember how many of them are now worshipping Him in the temple not made with hands—notably the Founder himself and the Bishop who conducted the service. Other names rise up before us of those who served God in this land, and counted not their lives too dear to be spent in His service—the Rev. Robert Clark, the learned Dr. Imaduddin, Mr. Henry Wright, Mrs. Datta, of Lahore, and Mr. Fazal, who had in the first year of the Mission acted as a lay helper, taking temporary charge during Mr. Perkins' absence at the hills.

It was the last occasion on which Miss Tucker

(A.L.O.E.), of Batala, was seen by her friends; she was present at the earnest invitation of a young Indian friend, making the journey to and from Batala on the same day. She insisted on sitting on the floor through the two services—first of dedication and then of Confirmation—and must have been very tired in consequence. But she gladdened many hearts by her warm words, and spoke to many of the villagers, one of whom remarked afterwards: “I am glad I looked upon the face of the *Buzurg* (honoured) Miss Sahib; it was as the face of an angel.” On her return she caught a chill, and before many weeks were over she had finished her long and unwearied course of ministry with joy, and was laid to rest in her loved Batala. Bishop Matthew writes of the dedication service: “I was assisted by the Revs. H. E. Perkins and Wadhawa Mal; the form used was that issued by Bishop French. . . . I rejoice to witness the steady growth and consolidation of the work in this village mission. We may still call it ‘a day of small things,’ but, as Miss Tucker remarked to me, ‘What would Henry Martyn have given to witness such a scene?’ May the Church of the New Birth deserve its name, and of many may it be said, ‘This one was born there,’ and may all adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.”

Time and space do not allow us to enlarge on the lives of several of those who were spiritually born again in Asrapur, nor is it wise that we should do so while they are still in our midst;

but we give thanks to God for that power which can uplift from the very dunghill of sin and degradation to a place among princes. Some whose lives were looked upon as far removed from the Christian ideal, and sorrowed over on this account, we have found to have been as lights and blessings to the people amongst whom they lived. Mr. Perkins used to recount encouragement received in this manner in very unexpected ways. We specially remember his account of how he went one afternoon to a village, and was led to dwell on the Vision of God. The next day a large body of people came forward for Christian teaching, of whom the greater number soon fell back, and only a few continued to learn. Amongst these a blind man and his blind wife, with their two children, were baptised. The man, having a good memory, was set to teach others all that he could learn by rote, but he died about a year after his baptism. During his illness it was discovered that he was an opium-eater, and was counteracting the effects of treatment by his sad habit. His widow was sent with the children to the Blind School in connexion with Miss Hewlett's work at Amritsar, but she died of consumption after a few months there. Not only did we hear that the poor blind woman's last days were lightened by special grace, leading her to give assurances of faith and hope to those around her, but Mr. Perkins' heart was cheered to hear that, with all the weaknesses and old habits of heathenism clinging around him, the blind man was never in any company where he did not

bring up the subject of Christ and try to teach all who would learn what he himself had learned of his Master.

The services held in the Church of the New Birth were modified to suit the needs of the peasants who met there Sunday after Sunday. The language was Panjabi, not the literary Gurmukhi of the Sikh Scriptures, but the mixed colloquial of the common people, more rough and uncouth in sound, but always racy and expressive in meaning. The lessons were not read straight through, but expounded catechetically; the hymns were chiefly *bhajans* in Hindi or Panjabi, sung to well-known Indian airs. The Founder had a profound love of music, and it was no difficulty to him to catch the intricate half and quarter tones of Indian melodies, and sing them with all the intenseness of an Eastern.

The sermons were short and catechetical—in fact, they were *not* sermons. Sometimes there would be a running commentary on the text all along the line of the congregation, and if there were signs of irreverence or want of gravity, these did not come from the illiterate. The discourse was often illustrated by objects, such as an earthen pitcher from the well, or a mirror; and once we remember the sermon was on the feeding of the Israelites by heavenly manna, when grains of sago served as the illustration. Later in the day, when a village woman was questioned on what she had learnt from the morning lesson, she instantly replied: “To eat *sagu dana* (sago) when one is

travelling." Another time, when the text was that the kingdom of God was not in eating or drinking, the question was asked, whether the Lord Jesus Christ had commanded His disciples to eat any special food? "*Dabbal-roti-jī*" (i.e. double, or English bread) was the prompt but disconcerting reply, which was not as wide of the mark as it sounded at the time, for the poor villager was one who was being prepared for Confirmation, and had just received instruction on the Sacraments, and heard, as well as seen, that bread of the English loaf was used. It is the custom now to use a freshly baked *chapati* for the Communion Service in that church. It is gladly provided by the pastor's wife.

The offertory was taken in kind and given in grain or whatever the giver possessed most of. We remember well one occasion when a live kid was put into the offertory bag—a big basket—and how it danced in and out among the congregation. Wasawa Das, who was taking the collection, gave full chase without the vestige of a smile on his face, and, having captured the live alms, tucked it solemnly under his left arm, whilst he went on with his basket to collect from the rest of the congregation.

We have mentioned before how full of imagery Mr. Perkins' teaching was, appealing to the hearts of his hearers. There was no inducement to the congregation to settle down comfortably for silent meditation and enjoy the sermon in that way, and there was no hope for sleepers. If the Padri, who usually preached sitting down on the chancel steps, did not call upon the sleeper to awake from

his sleep, a neighbouring brother performed the office by an audible exhortation, or something more rough. The women of those days, one confesses, were hopeless as listeners. They either settled themselves into groups for conversing on the latest topics, babies or prices of food, or they roused their infants into a state of howls and cries, and were only too pleased to be hurriedly turned out of church by the presiding elder, the aged Wasawa Das. A visitor, who had known Asrapur in its days of infancy, was heard to say years after, on the occasion of having spent a Sunday there, "How terribly respectable you have all become here!" Doubtless our services are less exciting and lively, but we trust that the quietness and reverence we see now are not entirely due to a habit of superiority and respectability, but rather to the growth of the spirit of worshipping in the beauty of holiness. Still the church is crowded on Sundays with the same peasant folk, or their children as the case may be; but some of those who were babes in Christ then are now in positions of trust, on church committees and village councils, and are honest servers of tables in the service of the church.

The building up of the living stones was the chief aim of Mr. Perkins' ministry. In these days when much is said and written on the essential duty of the Christian Church towards the scattered sheep in villages and isolated places, as if this were a new feature in the general routine of mission work, it is well to remember that Mr. Perkins made it his first

thought. Although he sought to spend and be spent on behalf of all classes, the "household of faith" was a thought that filled his heart and was a favourite expression on his lips. The policy of non-interference in temporal matters he maintained throughout his missionary career, impressing the dangers of the other line on all those associated with him. In writing to a friend he says: "I have seen melancholy examples of the frittering away of the energies and time of a missionary in matters of this kind, so that I would fain abstain from all aid to converts, save perhaps in a clear case of persecution for the faith's sake. As a general rule I am persuaded that we are only in our right place when acting as ministers and stewards of the mysteries of God, as an English parochial minister would be, not as litigants or defenders of our friends even when they are unjustly assailed."

He always held that the disadvantages of belonging to the ruling race outweighed considerably the advantages to those whose aim was to serve in all humility, but who were continually tempted by circumstances to act otherwise. Again we are constrained to quote from Mr. Perkins: "Probably our friends in China, Central Africa, and other countries under foreign sway, oft-times feel tempted to envy the Indian missionary the protection of equal laws and security to life, but experience teaches that there is another side to the shield. The facts I state will show the disadvantage of belonging to the ruling race. Some months ago I visited

a large village to preach in it, but found the people sullen and hostile, because the Government taxation had just been increased, and I was deemed to be one of the set of men who had inflicted this inconvenience. Again, our poorer Christians consider we treat them unfairly, in that when they have any law-suit or police charge brought against them, however justly and however disconnected from any matter of religion, we do not espouse the cause of the Christian, and defend him with money and time. This feeling amounts to a direct deterrent against Christianity in the minds of one and another who would not be disinclined to the truth if they could look on missionaries as just persons, justice being in their view what really amounts to partisanship."

Mr. Perkins endeavoured to build the Church in three important directions. Firstly, to ground the newly baptised in the Word of God. For this purpose he sought to set apart in each village, where there were Christian families, a little prayer-room where any man who knew more than the others, or a Village Reader, would hold a daily service, generally at the end of the day when the work was done and the people were free. Mr. Perkins was so far successful that before the end of 1893 there were five such village churches or Christian congregations set apart in a circuit comprising a hundred and twenty villages. And it was remarkable how much progress some of these village Christians made in Bible knowledge and spiritual growth in these short years.



THE ROUND TOWER, NOW USED AS A SCHOOL



SCHOOL AND FAMINE CHILDREN AT ASRAPUR,
WITH A FEW OF THE WORKERS

Secondly, Mr. Perkins laid great stress on the family life of a Christian home. His pastoral visits included all the members; he had a kind and ready word for the hard-worked and often neglected mother of the family, and he knew everyone by name. But it was the little ones who knew and loved him best. How strange we used to think it, that the Padri never seemed to mind their dirty faces, and scanty, or less than scanty, clothing! He would be seated in the middle of a *charpaie* (bed), and the children would gather around him in wondering interest, as he would tell them the old Bible stories, and make them new and pleasant to them. "Unless we can work the family life into some sort of a Christian ideal, so as to make the wife and children interested in Christian truth, any advance in godliness among our people is not to be expected." From the first the Christian women and children were visited and taught regularly by Mrs. Perkins, or one or other of the C.E.Z. missionaries associated with her. Sick ones were tended and fed in their own homes; sometimes women or children were brought to the hospital, and men to one of the out-houses; poor ones were given work, not money.

Thirdly, Mr. Perkins was keen on the education of Christian children, though he did not recommend or adopt such a kind of education for the masses as would unfit them for their natural everyday life. The village Scripture Reader was there, not only to give spiritual instruction, but to teach the men and boys to read; whilst the more intelligent

boys and girls were removed, if their parents did not object, to the small boarding-schools established at Asrapur. Education was then in its infancy amongst villagers; no value was set upon it, excepting in so far as it might bring money to the family. If a promise could be made that the boy, who was being taken out of his home and ceasing to be a source of income to the family, would earn more when he became a *munshi* or *babu*, the parents were willing to make the sacrifice, but not otherwise. Such a thing as the parents bearing any part of the expense was not even hinted at, it would have been thought too absurd. How different now from what it was! We find even very poor parents amongst the village Christians willing to bear hardship for the sake of obtaining for their children what had been denied to themselves. Mr. Perkins held that it was the duty of the missionary to give the mass of enquirers as much education as would allow them to read the Bible, but not so much as would bribe them into becoming Christians, or despising their relations and simple occupations. But to those who showed a capacity for better things he would not deny a liberal education, for he looked forward to a time when the spiritual administration of the Church in all its offices, as well as the temporal affairs of this country, would be more largely in the hands of the people of the land.

We have endeavoured to describe some of those points in the Founder's life and teaching which his fellow-workers specially learnt from him, and which have in some measure marked the years of

succeeding service. Another point emphasised by him was that the servants of Christ should abstain from all doubtful methods in gaining converts. The cause of the Gospel was strong enough to do without a well-meaning but sometimes questionable method of winning converts. The honour of the Gospel was at stake, and its messengers had all the greater reason to be open and fair in their dealings with non-Christians, and to uphold the laws of the land regarding minors and women, confidently leaving the issues to the unfailing guidance of the Holy Spirit. Souls must be left to deal personally with their God, when they had been led to a knowledge of Him. When harassed and perplexed as to the right way of dealing with a doubting soul, how often the verse from St. John vii. 17 was quoted to some of us : "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know," bringing patience and hope to our hearts. Mr. Perkins was an example to all of the prayerful life. He prayed for many who never knew what blessings he asked, and received, for them ; his prayer cycle grew richer every year, and in it were to be found the names of each of the Christians in Asrapur, down to the youngest infant. He asked for the name of each child who was added to the families he had known, and added them to the prayer cycle when he was far away in England. It is impossible for us to know how many blessings the Church of the New Birth owed to him who wrestled in prayer for each individual.

Mr. Perkins' method of work was in quietness

and reticence, and he greatly feared to give wrong impressions of results ; for this reason he was looked upon by some as something of a pessimist in his missionary views and addresses. To those who knew him intimately, and learnt to understand his reasons for shrinking from any publicity, even of encouragement, he was always an inspirer, not only in zeal and devotion, but also in a desire to look upon things, as they came, in the light of a searching sincerity and truth, and not of self-deceiving romance. An old missionary friend wrote of him, after he was taken away from us : " One very often regretted that such an exalted and yet infectious type of Christianity was not permitted to work longer amongst us as a missionary, and yet we had him those long years, and we can only rightly adore the Giver while we seek grace to follow in His servant's steps, which were so like His Son's." It was a rich heritage that the Church of the New Birth entered into, in the life and teaching of its faithful shepherd, the value of which strikes us more and more as time goes on, and our own failures and shortcomings become apparent. But God is faithful, and continues to bless His servant's labours and prayers, in making manifest, through those whom he taught, the savour of His knowledge in every place.

CHAPTER IV

“ I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU ORPHANS ”

(1893-1900)

NOT many weeks after the dedication of the church at Asrapur, when the joy and gladness of the great gathering of friends of the Founders was still fresh in the minds of all, a sudden sorrow darkened the lives of the little settlement. The mother of Asrapur was taken grievously ill in December 1893, and for weeks that precious life hung upon a thread. For the first time it was given to that happy home to realise what a binding together of hearts a common sorrow brings. It had seemed at the opening of the church that there could be nothing greater than the gladness of a common joy, but now they realised that sorrow opened out a greater possibility of fellowship when master and servant, shepherd and sheep, met heart to heart, and together waited for the will of the Lord to be made known.

In the history of the Mission, sorrows have come over and over again, in sickness unto death to some, in bereavements to others, reminders from God that if one member suffers the whole body is wrung by pain, resulting in a greater flow of love

and sympathy throughout the church, not only to its members but to those outside. The long weeks of suspense and watching by the sufferer not only helped to unite the little flock, but showed them, in their pastor's life, how a man of God receives the chastenings of his Lord. Our non-Christian neighbours take sickness and sorrows as Job's friend did of old, and they often express themselves to us, Christian workers, especially to doctors: "*Ji*, how is it that you suffer who are always serving God and His suffering people?" or "It must be for sins in the past life that you suffer so greatly, for you cannot have committed any great sins in this present one," or some such thoughts as the Jews had of the man born blind.

Many were the lessons which the members learnt from their loved head, the pastor, such as constant waiting upon God. The Christian night-watchman loved to tell: "How often in the long watches of the cold winter nights, I stood silently watching the *Padri* walk up and down the front verandah, absorbed in prayer; and sometimes, when I said a word of sympathy, he would stop and say, 'Now brother, you pray for me,' and I would pray." Quietness and isolation were parts of the lesson the *Padri* learnt; he would not set himself up as a teacher at this time, and never took a service all through those weeks, though he was often in church as a suppliant. Trial is the pathway of humiliation, when the soul must stand in all meekness waiting to be taught entire dependence on the will of God. Many friends came and went; all brought

with them cheer and sympathy, for the Founders had always attached to themselves "lovers and friends" wherever they went. During the years they had spent in Asrapur, many of their friends of old official days, besides old and young missionaries, Indian Christians, veterans and new converts, and girls and boys from the Mission boarding-schools, had found their way to the home, where the welcome was ever ready and the hosts eager to talk on the special interests of their visitors. Many were the hearts outside Asrapur who continued in prayer, and the God who hears and answers spared the precious life of her who had been to that settlement as a strong tower for so many years. The verdict of the doctors was that the invalid should return to England, and their going away caused much sadness to the village friends. No word of farewell was said; they were not even allowed to look upon the face of their beloved friend, as, in her weakness, it would have proved too much for her. Those who had been to her as daughters of the house accompanied the invalid, and it was a sad procession indeed which left Asrapur for Amritsar in February 1894. The Christians of the settlement watched from the housetops in silent grief, controlling beyond their wont any sound of tears, but they did not realise at the time that they would not see the face of their loved friend again.

Later, the Padri returned to pack up the few things they needed for their journey to England, the rest being left as a gift to the Mission. His

heart was too full for words ; he spoke to very few of those present, a few old servants and the beloved fellow-workers, most of whom had been gathered in by himself. His words were : " The will of the Lord be done." In March 1894 Mr. and Mrs. Perkins sailed for England from Karachi. The last to see them off was a young Indian worker, who had spent what seemed to her the best four years of her life with them in a close fellowship never to be forgotten, and two old faithful Indian servants.

Asrapur seemed for a time orphaned indeed, but the whole work there had been so well organised and arranged by Mr. Perkins that, even though he was suddenly called away from it, those who remained found no difficulty in taking up the various threads, and continuing to weave them into a harmonious whole. The pastor, the Rev. Wadhawa Mal, had been associated with Mr. Perkins for two years in very intimate fellowship, and was well able to carry on the work. The Founder ever strove to be a wise master-builder, setting himself from the very first not to achieve much by himself, but to train others for responsibility and leadership. He spoke naturally and unreservedly about the policy of missions, the stewardship of mission funds, the relations between workers, the weaknesses or strong points of various members, so that those who worked with him got an insight into the difficulties of the missionary from without and within, and not only a surface knowledge of his enviable position as *Hakim* ruler



A CONVERTED WITCH, WITH PICTURE SCROLL AND
MONEY BOX, READY TO PREACH AND RECEIVE DONATIONS
FOR HOSPITAL



HOSPITAL GROUP OF CONVERTS AND RESCUED CHILDREN

and administrator of unlimited mission funds. The buildings which had been put up had been duly registered, and the compound was divided up with great care and foresight between the C.M.S. and C.E.Z.M.S. ladies, though the property itself was a gift to the C.M.S.

The salaries of the agents were all paid from general funds, Mr. Perkins' gifts being more general than private, his aim being to put things on a sound basis and not to allow workers to be dependent on any single individual. He shrank essentially from what is popularly known as "running a mission," and was suspicious of permanent good resulting from the "free lance."

During the years 1894-8 Asrapur learnt more surely the lesson of not leaning upon man. The God who had led the Founders to establish the settlement was a very present help, and though, humanly speaking, the prop was taken away, God continued His work. Miss Cooper, in association with several workers of the C.E.Z.M.S., was reaching the outskirts of the district by means of itinerations. A school for the daughters of the village Christians was started under the management of an Indian teacher.

The medical work continued to increase, and in God's mercy was used to bring in some souls, who became faithful messengers of the Gospel. The life of a little cripple, who was an inmate of the hospital, has already been written in a small book, called "His First Christmas"; and though more crippled and suffering every year of his life, he is

still a living message of hope and joy to a community of poor lepers, even more suffering than himself. Above all things, the workers who remained sought to keep up the spirit of peace and unity, which had been so rich a heritage from the Founder's example, and the peace remained wonderfully unbroken. Differences in race, in education and social status, seemed to make no difference in that settlement, and Asrapur, the "Village of Hope," became Chainpur, the abode of rest, to many a weary one in those days. Alas! that it has not always remained so: sometimes there have been "broken arcs" to keep us longing for the "perfect round" of heaven.

In 1898 another change, or series of changes, altered the outward aspect of the settlement. It is strange how, in the certainty that change must be, the human heart shrinks so greatly from it, and how all human instinct is for permanence, even though our own experience, and the experience of others, have proved that changes must come, and indeed are our chances in life. This year found Miss Worsfold transferred, Miss Wingfield-Digby retiring, and Miss Cooper, the senior missionary, resigning from the C.E.Z.M.S. on her approaching marriage. The Rev. T. R. Wade writes about the transition state of the women's work: "There are some problems to be solved and difficulties to be met, but as God has guarded and blessed in the past, we doubt not that He will do so in the future. There is much here for which to thank God and take courage."

In January 1899 the C.E.Z.M.S. work was placed in the hands of Indians, as the C.M.S. work had already been since 1894. The pastor was ordained deacon, and he carried on the work under the supervision of a European missionary, generally the Principal of St. John's College, Lahore. The Rev. H. G. Grey writes of his time of office as "One of the brightest spots in my missionary life from 1891, when I came to itinerate with Mr. Perkins. A year or two afterwards when Mr. Perkins went home, he and the C.M.S. asked me to superintend the work here. To do this in company with the Rev. Wadhawa Mal has been a great pleasure, and it is with sincere regret that I now have to give it up. One cannot readily find a more compact and harmonious mission, the excellent work of the C.E.Z.M.S. ladies being carried on most efficiently and in complete unity of spirit with that of the Rev. Wadhawa Mal."

Since that time to this present year, an interval of twelve years, there has always been a succession of "pure and faithful deaconesses," gathered in from various races and religions, humbly ministering to the Lord. To the non-Christian women around us, the service of this united band of Indian Christian sisters has been, more than anything else, an amazing revelation leading them to desire higher things for themselves. To Him be the Glory! These Indian workers of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society greatly value the trust placed in them by the Society in giving them the freedom to arrange their own plan of work

in the district, as well as the means to carry on the various branches of work.

There were many difficulties to contend with, one being that of the scarcity of funds, but time and experience proved that fears were needless, and that all needs were supplied by the Giver of every good gift. If greater responsibilities meant a larger cost in life, the means too, in a larger-hearted loyalty and support from workers on the spot and friends outside, were abundantly received. To the Founders, this new departure in the history of Asrapur was a fulfilment of their greatest desire. Mr. Perkins writes : " It is the one hope of India to see her sons and daughters taking up the cry to its dead souls to look to the Living One. Is it not curious that both the missions which I have had the privilege of starting are carried on entirely by Indians? I refer to Hoshiarpur, under my old friend Dr. K. C. Chatterjee (pastor of the American Presbyterian Mission there), and now Asrapur. My poor faith never looked to Indian women workers, but, lo ! the Lord has granted them also. I am quietly working on to get you all more recognition, but one has to be most patient and watchful to say the right thing and at the right moment only. The good Lord guide all His servants evermore."

The growth of the visible Church seemed stationary at this period, if not retrogressive : many of the Christians had left and settled in the new Chenab colony, where free grants of land were being made by Government, through missionary societies, to Christians from agricultural classes.

Some, who had not been fortunate enough to receive lands, had fallen away, so that the work amongst Christians seemed to be decreasing. On the other hand, the opportunities for reaching the higher classes of non-Christians had greatly increased; there was a marked attitude of friendliness to the Indian workers, whilst, as a result of the hospital work, bigotry and prejudice were being undermined throughout the district, and family life was being brought under Christian influence. For instance, when a patient was brought in from a distance to be placed under treatment, her husband and other men-folk would come into residence, either in the Padri's guest-house, or in the adjoining village. Having nothing else to do, they would find their way to the pastor, or to one of the lay helpers' houses, and enter into religious conversation, this often proving to be their first contact with Christians. They would drop in at the daily service, and be in attendance on Sundays at all the services, and take a personal interest in the life of the place, especially in the sick and the little orphans. Not a few would help by gifts in one way or another.

Two more of such quiet years of ploughing and seed-sowing bring us to the year 1900, a year which proved to be an eventful one in the life-story of the settlement, as well as in the history of many individuals. It was the year of the great famine in Rajputana. Three seasons had come and gone without bringing the rains to a soil which, at the best of times, is poor and barren, and it was a

sore famine which now devastated the land, destroying thousands of precious human lives and much cattle. Movements were started in all parts of the country, and Famine Relief Societies found plenty to do. The Government, as well as various religious bodies, Christian and non-Christian, were doing their utmost to relieve the famine-stricken, and to rescue orphaned children.

One hot summer day, a strange Padri was seen to be addressing a small band of Christian worshippers in the Church of the New Birth, on behalf of the famine sufferers. The people sat spell-bound through a long sermon, their faces showing what they were feeling. The sermon ended with the usual appeal for help, but not for the usual charity of money alone, for the preacher went on to enumerate the different kinds of help needed—clothes, volunteers to dispense food and medicines in person, and foster-parents to adopt rescued orphans. The last seemed almost an ironical suggestion, for it seemed out of place where poor peasants were being addressed, who found life hard enough for themselves and their children. The sermon was over, the collection taken, and the congregation dismissed with a blessing, which surely made many rich that day, and there was no sorrow or regret in what followed after. A group of men was to be seen in long and earnest talk outside the church door, after which they adjourned to the mission-house, and, through an old white-haired man, boldly asked for a child for each. "Give us boys," they said, "we are too poor and rough

to bring up girls." It was some time before their meaning was made clear to the listeners, that it was the famine orphans that their fatherly hearts hungered after. And so it came to pass that twelve orphan boys, from the ages of three to fourteen, were picked out from a relay sent to Amritsar, and arrived about a fortnight later in Asrapur. They were miserable little objects indeed, old and withered men in miniature, with never a look of interest or pleasure on their wizened features, even when they were met and welcomed by the whole settlement of men, women and children. The men carried the orphans in their arms, the women embraced them and shed tears of sympathy and love over them, whilst the little children danced in and out between them, trying to entertain them with their most prized toys.

For weeks the Christians never flagged in their zeal and care for the orphans, who were put into the hospital at once as patients, until they were healthy enough to be adopted into homes. The Sunday following, a telling sermon was preached again, by the pastor this time, on "God's Well-merited Curses." "Let us," he continued, "see in these sufferers what we and our children deserve; can we say that they were more unrighteous than ourselves or others?" When he stopped speaking, a strange oppressive silence fell upon the congregation, and each one seemed to see his or her own sins in the light of God's countenance. Before the benediction could be pronounced, a man, respected for his position and upright bearing,

of a superior class to most present, rose, and, with broken voice and many tears, stood up and confessed to the pastor, before God and man, sins of which his nearest neighbour had no suspicion. There had never been such a scene before in that church, and never has been since. He said that if children suffered for the sins of their fathers, his only child might suffer curse upon curse for his sins unconfessed and unrepented of. That day marked an epoch, not only in that man's life, but in the lives of some others, and in truth they found the Saviour, "faithful and just to forgive sin, and to cleanse." That man stands for truth and a godly life in the midst of many temptations and worldly neighbours in a distant village; whilst the son, for whom he was justly concerned, is now in training to be an evangelist to his own people. It was through the desolate orphans the people of Asrapur saw their Lord coming to them with a fresh power to comfort and to save, revealing to them the Father.

A few short months after, owing to the death of their Founder, Asrapur itself was thrown as really as the famine orphans upon the goodness of a Father's love and care. News had been occasionally received that Mr. Perkins was in a feeble state of health, but it was wholly unexpected that his departure would be so sudden, after only a few days' illness. When the news was received, the Church summoned the settlers to a Memorial Service in the church, which was full of living and loving memories of the faithful pastor. It was a service of praise, which the Indian pastor conducted,

and of earnest prayer that we, who remained, might worthily walk in the footsteps of him who had followed his Master so closely. Later, when letters followed, telling of his manner of departure, there was another service of praise—"For all the saints, who from their labours rest." From his diary and letters to friends, it appeared that Mr. Perkins had for some time lived in constant expectation of the Master's summons. We find an entry: "God's time for giving lasted many years; it now looks like the time of taking away."

August 5th, 1900.—"Preached this morning; great weakness and distress." (The text was St. John xvi. 30, and he dwelt specially on the loneliness that was awaiting each one in the struggle with the last enemy—death.)

August 14th.—"Had a night of great suffering (from the breathlessness of a heart attack), but the last verse of 'Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the strife will not be long,' sounded through me."

Writing about the distress of August 16th, he says to a relation who was passing through the worry of changing her residence: "I am profoundly thankful that I am able to leave the arrangement of our mansion, among the many of the Father's house, in the dear Crucified hand. I can never forget Christ's sweetness to me in a perfectly quiet, unemotional way that Thursday night. Fellowship came as naturally as talking to one's wife, though the bodily distress was very sharp."

On September 3rd, the old heart trouble attacked him again, and the last entry was made in his diary

that day. "Very distressed. O Lord undertake for me, and prepare me for what Thou art preparing for me, for Christ's sake. Amen." He remembered many dear friends by name in prayer, and asked for hymns and verses to be repeated to him, most of which he would finish for himself. "Not a thought, not a care," were his words even in great suffering: "I am sure many are praying for me."

The loved settlement at Asrapur, which was never far from his thoughts, and for whose well-being he was constantly using his strength in England, was the last to be spoken of, when he dictated his messages to the physician friend by his bedside, and sent words of remembrance to the two Indian fellow-labourers, with whom he had kept in close touch by letters full of encouragement and wise counsel.

The suffering was soon over and the conflict ended, and on September 5th, 1900, Henry Edmund Perkins found an abundant entrance into the joy of his Lord. "To the sacred memory of Henry Edmund Perkins, M.A.," the church at Asrapur has put up a simple marble tablet, in the Urdu and Gurmukhi characters, telling to all who may see it, that, after serving her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria for thirty years, he became a missionary of the Church Missionary Society, and founded this Mission. And the message of his life is embodied in the text to be found below the inscription: "I have chosen you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

CHAPTER V

THE WAY OF THE VILLAGE

OUR work in the villages of the Central Panjab does not lie amongst a variety of races or divers languages. It is believed that from the earliest times the Land of the Five Rivers was peopled by a race of white men, for the race type is uniform "from the Rajput and Brahman at the top down to the scavenger at the bottom."¹

We are therefore prepared to believe that the legend explaining the Chuhra origin has elements of truth in it, and that their ancestor was one who had been cast out from the community for some violation of caste rules. The caste system, as we find it existing, is believed to have arisen about the sixth century B.C. A caste is a collection of families, or groups of families or clans, bearing a common name, and though the caste must be the same there can be no inter-marriage between members of the same clan. They trace their descent from a common ancestor, either human or divine, and are now divided into various guilds or societies, such as the priestly guild, the literary guild, the warrior guild, and the various

¹ W. Crooke.

trade guilds. During this earthly lifetime, an iron fate compels the members of each guild to remain in that state into which they were born.

When Hindus were converted to Islam in masses, the caste system, with its different trade guilds, was not effaced, though the prohibitions of Hinduism pertaining to food and intermarriage were relaxed. Between the priestly Brahman at the top and the Chuhra outcast at the bottom, we find the bulk of the population divided into agricultural and industrial castes.

Eighty-nine per cent. of the population of the country is to be found living in the villages, and of these sixty to seventy per cent. depend for daily food on the treasures which Mother Earth gives only to those who love and work for her. The Jat farmer holds every inch of land which has come down to him from a long line of ancestors with a passionate love, such as he is not able to give even to his wife or children. Every dusty inch of it has been fought for; lives and gold have been spent lavishly on it, to keep it from going into the hands of strangers. And every day any of the law-courts around may be seen crowded by sturdy tillers of the soil, so stolid and patient to look at, but consumed all the while with hatred and a spirit of vengeance towards those who are in any way defrauding them of their inheritance, and ready for bloodshed on their return to the village, if the court has not upheld their cause. "The man who owns land holds a kingdom of his own" is a village proverb.

A village is composed of a group of farm holdings, the heads of which are generally clansmen, and round about are gathered artisans to supply them with the necessities of life and means for carrying on their agricultural pursuits. An average-sized village will be made up of the farmers, Sikh or Moslem Jat—though most of our farmers are Sikhs—and a colony, consisting of the village carpenter, the blacksmith, the potter, the washerman (who is also tailor by caste), the drawer of water, Hindu and Mohammedan, the barber (who is the presiding genius at weddings, as well as a willing surgeon and dentist), the *mirasi* (the village jester and genealogist), the goldsmith, the shoemaker, the oilman (with his pressing machine and long-suffering bullock to work it), the weaver, and the Chuhra, who is compelled to live outside the pale of the village on account of his being of no caste. In most villages there is also the Hindu *bania*, who keeps a retail shop of food products, and waxes fat by usury.

All these artisans and tradesmen are essential to the well-being of the farmer ; they supply him with quaint, and often artistic, earthen pots and pans for his household use, or cunningly fashioned pitchers for his Persian wheel, every well needing sixty to eighty such vessels. They mend his well, and fashion the rough-and-ready but convenient implements for field use ; they shoe his animals, or turn out his locks and chains in the village forge. They wash his clothes, should he express a desire for such service, which is not often ;

they take his rupees, and turn them into finely wrought silver and gold ornaments for his wife and children, the jewellery thus becoming his local savings bank. They take the cotton the wife has spun and weave it into a rough material, not elegant in appearance, but capable of much wear and tear, unlike the cheap cotton goods poured into the village from the civilised West, enticing the women folk to clothe themselves in cheap finery, which does not attract the prosaic Jat, who hates foppishness, excepting in his own old-world way of wearing white clothes and a turban, prominent for its size and coquettish shape. The man who is essential to the daily life of the farmer is the hardy Chuhra, despised though he may be by reason of his social status. As he is essential to the farmer, so is his wife to the farmer's household. He may work as an *athri*, which means that he works by the year for *one* man only. He helps in all the field-work, ploughing, sowing, watering and weeding; his wages are in proportion to the farmer's harvest, besides which he has two meals a day given him, clothes and shoes twice a year, vegetables and wood. But the most usual form of labour for the Chuhra is *sepi*. In this case he works for two or three families as job-man, and only receives his food if he goes to a distance to work. His wife cleans the cattle-yards, turns the refuse into dung-cakes for fuel, and receives payment separately. A man cannot take up *sepi* without a wife, or rather a woman, be it mother, sister or wife, who will work in the household of

the farmer. The Chuhra is indispensable to the farmer when the cane juice is pressed and turned into sugar—an occupation in which he takes a full share, as cane juice is, like metals, never contaminated by touch. He is an appreciable quantity in the village life, and forms about one-twelfth of the whole population, while in our district there is one to every two Jats. The children of the Chuhra can at a very early age earn their living by cow-herding and making themselves useful in the fields, and even if not paid in money they can earn their daily food. All the other tradespeople get paid in grain at harvest times, besides being allowed a patch of ground to cultivate on their own account from the conjoint portion belonging to the village. A patch is also often given to the village priest of mosque or temple, or to the caretaker of the village *Dharmsala*. The religion of the farmer is looked after for him by the Moslem *mullah*, or Brahman priest, as the case may be. There may be a village mosque, where the *mullah* lives and holds a school for Mohammedan boys, to whom he imparts knowledge with as little exertion to himself as possible, and from whom he receives fees in fuel or food, and for an entrance fee, money and a turban. The *Dharmsala* is the Hindu or Sikh guest-house, where any co-religionist may find a night's shelter and a bed. It is the chief place of resort for officials, when visiting the village to investigate a criminal case, or collect revenue.

The head man of the village is known as the *Lambardar*, meaning a "man who keeps numbers,"

and is the registrar of land, while the registrar of births and deaths is the village *chaukidar* (watchman), who is easily induced to account for deaths according to the desire of the family. Coming upon a first case of plague in a neighbouring village, we asked if the death had been registered as such. "Ah, why should I disclose the disgrace of my village? I had it entered as cough and fever," was the answer.

The marriage ceremony in any farmer's family is of great importance to the village life. For a week or ten days the place is thrown into a lively state of merry-making; all the tradespeople and artisans (menials, as they are called) receive presents in money, food or clothes, the lion's share falling to the barber, the *mirasi* and the *kahars*, who carry the bridal litter, whilst their wives are also generously repaid for their services on high days and festivals.

As our work lies amongst the women, I venture to write at greater length of the life of those whom we meet day by day, and have come to know and love for the many good qualities shown in their family relationships. There is a fair division of labour between the sexes in the village life, and the position of woman is not an unimportant one. Her life has as much variety (slavery the town sister would call it) as the man's, and it is mainly due to her exertions and good management that there is comfort and plenty in the farmer's house. There is little of independent labour on the woman's part, for all are married, or likely to be so, her



A WIFE TAKING HER HUSBAND'S BREAKFAST TO THE FIELD



VILLAGE WOMEN FILLING THEIR WATER-POTS

part being to manage the farmer's income, as mother or wife, or to supplement her husband's income, if in a humbler position of life. The house-wife is an extremely thrifty person, and, though illiterate, is able to work at mental arithmetic in her domestic life in a most astonishing way, and can hardly ever be defrauded of her rights by even the fraction of a penny. Her duties are many; she always prepares and cooks the food, or, if in specially easy circumstances, she supervises the cooking of her daughters-in-law or servant. At one time she did the grinding herself, but as a rule she has it done by some poor woman, or at the village *kharās*—a stone mill for grinding wheaten and maize flour, worked by oxen. She looks after the feeding of the cows and buffaloes, milks them herself, and churns the butter in a primitive wooden churn, having turned the milk into sour curds before churning. Her house is devoid of any furniture excepting bedsteads, which are set up against the wall by day, the bedclothes being folded and put away; her *lares et penates* consist of the brass pots and pans, her dowry portion. At certain times of the year her work is very heavy. During harvest time she is up before dawn cooking a meal for her men-folk, including labourers in the field. She cooks three times a day, sending the wheaten cakes (*chapatis*) to the fields by her girls, and carrying large quantities of butter-milk in earthen pitchers, cleverly poised on her head. Sour butter-milk is a very refreshing and nourishing drink for the hot, thirsty men

hard at work reaping, and they can consume pints of it at one time. She has hardly time to come home again, before she has to prepare to cook another meal, and so on until late in the evening. But there is no time or desire to be sorry for oneself, when every soul is busy gathering in the golden grain, threshing it out under the open sky, and winnowing it with the help of the hot breezes, and then seeing it lie in golden hillocks out in the ancestral fields until the town capitalist comes round and carries it away to send to distant countries, linking some little remote village with the West in a way undreamed of by the villager.

What is needed for the year's supply, and something over for emergencies, is taken into the home, and now the wife holds the purse-strings, for it is all under her direct control. She also has the milk and butter to dispose of as she pleases. In many villages it is not dignified for a farmer's wife to sell milk; she may sell butter or *ghi* (clarified butter preserved for cooking). If she is at all capable she drives a good trade by her perquisites, laying by a private hoard of money,—though she is always ready to use it for the good of her family on a rainy day,—or she may turn the money into jewellery, which is also her private bank. During the short winter days her life is much taken up with cotton-picking, or capsicum-picking, for which labour she always hires women. In a good cotton season a woman is able to pick eight to twelve pounds of cotton a day, and if it is hired labour, the picker gets one-fifth of the whole

picked ; the same with capsicum or red pepper corns, which are not measured by weight, but in *tinds*, the earthen pitchers hung in a Persian well wheel. At all times, but especially in the long winter evenings, the women and girls may be seen working their spinning-wheels, sitting together and singing, and many are the songs of the spinning-wheel. The subject is either the brothers of the maidens, their feats of valour, and the beauty of their brides ; or it is the mother-in-law's persecutions, from which the girl begs in song to be removed. The adoration which young girls give to their brothers is only equalled in after life by the passionate devotion to their children, and especially to their sons.

The women who are obliged to supplement the family income do it by spinning, or grinding, or embroidering cloths in a kind of filoselle silk for their well-to-do neighbours. The work is tedious and the payment small, for a woman who spins hard all day can at the most earn about twopence in the day. The grinder makes even less, as her work cannot be continuous ; whilst the embroiderer is able to earn more than either, but here the sum given is disproportionate to the skilled labour given. The women who share the occupations of their husbands at their trades are the wives of the potter, the weaver, and perhaps the tailor, the barber, the *mirasi*, the oilman, and the Chuhra. These are necessities to their husbands in their various callings. The barberess is at the beck and call of the village ladies in taking messages,

invitations, or presents to friends and married daughters, and often acts as chaperone to them when they go out calling outside their own villages. The *mirasan* also acts in the same way, and besides, with the barberess, acts as hairdresser to the ladies, whose heads are dressed and adorned with jewels and silk about once a week. The *mirasan* also leads in the singing of marriage songs, and in regaling the guests with her jokes, which are more remarkable for their coarseness than wit; she wails the dirges at funerals, being a ready minstrel and able to compose on the spur of the moment appropriate odes on the departed. There are also the wives of the Hindu and Mohammedan priests who have special offices to fulfil. The *mullah's* wife lays out her fellow-women for their funerals, and teaches girls and young women the Koran, or portions of it. The Panjabi village woman, then, is an important element in the life of the community, and has no intention of hiding her light under a bushel. She may be seen in the village streets, on her roofs, and abroad in the fields, and she may be heard from afar, for her voice is loud and harsh, due to speaking across a whole street of roof-tops to her neighbours, or calling to her children, and perhaps cattle, from the distance of a quarter of a mile ! ¹

The men, if not outwardly deferential, are mostly amenable to the woman's rule in the home ;

¹ The Indian way of measuring distance is by the carrying power of a voice; the unit is a *Kos*, or about a mile and a half,

few are strong enough to withstand the command of their mothers, to whom they give the utmost reverence. It is a constant source of surprise to see the spoilt, pampered little boys of the household grow up into respectful, dutiful sons; this is because of their having been taught to reverence age. In our medical work, we have many opportunities of seeing the devotion of sons to their mothers, of brothers to their sisters, and of husbands to their wives. As for the devotion of mothers to their children, especially to their boys, it is, one might almost say, unsurpassed. It savours of the passionate love which animals have for their young. A mother cannot bear other arms to hold and nurse her child, and is prepared to watch over a sick one unweariedly by day and night, taking no thought or care for herself, forgetting even her food.

There is much in the simple life of the peasants which makes it fascinating to those who have been brought up in the artificial atmosphere of towns. The women are so hearty and good-natured, ready to do a kind turn to their neighbours, and not taken up entirely with their own narrow interests, but living a larger life of neighbourliness and usefulness to the whole community. The children seem such happy, rollicking little things, not forward, but entirely friendly, with much innate politeness in their free, unconscious manners, and truthful compared with their elders. The boys have many outdoor games, and frequently play at their ancestral trades; sometimes when one is out

one can see a miniature farm laid out by a group of small boys, with a cattle shed, a central well, showing little rills of water running from it into furrowed fields, well divided off from each other, and even a tiny shed all by itself with the cows with calves ! But all their games are not quiet ; they have varieties of hockey, prisoner's base, primitive cricket and hop-scotch. In the rainy season every important village has its wrestling matches, when the tom-tom summons competitors from other villages to come and compete in the various feats of skill, and the elders look on and applaud or jeer as the case may be. Little girls make mud pies and play with rag dolls, the same as girls do all over the world. Catching ball or keeping it up, singing or reciting a string of almost unintelligible words at the same time, is a great game with girls ; another game consists of picking up one by one small hard stones or concrete, which have been previously heaped against each other, without turning by a hair's-breadth any of the other stones composing the heap. This requires great delicacy of touch. Swinging is a favourite game both with boys and girls, and especially in the rainy season one sees swing after swing under the village trees, a reminiscence of the swinging of the infant Krishna. It is considered especially fortunate for young people to give up four Sundays in the month of *Sawan* (rains) to swinging under the green trees of the village ; *Sawan* is the season when the god Krishna frolicked and gambolled with the milkmaids, according to Hindu legend. There are also

the moonlight games, when the beautiful moonlight shines with a splendour unknown in the West, and turns the unpicturesque mud village into undreamed of beauty, and the village pond into rippling lights and shades of unearthly glory.

It is not all play, however, especially for the girls, who learn early to be a help in the house, minding the babies, taking the meals out to the men in the fields, kneading the dough, picking *sag* (greens from the fields), and learning to embroider, if they are of the better classes, and to spin, whatever class of life they belong to. Of plain needlework they know very little, but a good many learn how to sew their own simple garments, tearing the stuff with their teeth, which are as strong as, and certainly more accessible than, a pair of scissors. Scissors are a dearly loved possession, owned by very few, and can only be given away by us to our best friends in the villages, or as prizes to scholars.

The girls of the village are not married at a very early age, or, if they are, it is only a betrothal; so they have a good long time at home before entering on their domestic troubles, and grow up strong and healthy. It is touching to find how the hearts of the girls cling round their father's home, and how gladly they come back to it whenever they are allowed. There is a feast in the year, known as the *Lori*, which is akin to the old-fashioned Mothering Sunday, when every girl comes home to her mother, and receives gifts in money and clothes from the entire household. The father's

home (*peke*) means freedom, naturalness and love, and when we speak to the women of Heaven as our Fatherland, it conveys the utmost of joy that our hearers can comprehend. The father-in-law's home is always the stranger land; the young wife is all her life amongst strangers and foreigners in it; she may be loved and honoured, and have all her needs generously provided for, but as long as the mother-in-law is her sole guardian and supervisor she can never be altogether natural or free. Whenever she goes to her father's home, she is as free as a bird. The code of the village is for every man to look upon the daughters of the village as mothers if they are old, sisters if they are contemporaries, and daughters if they are young. They are unrestrained and free, therefore, to walk about in the village streets, and are hardly ever treated with anything but a brotherly interest by the men. With the daughters-in-law it is entirely otherwise; they are strangers, and may not be treated with the same familiarity by the men of the village, so they are kept under greater restraints and seclusion.

We have tried to depict the usual atmosphere of the village life as we see it in its outer aspect. And so far it is seemingly a happy, unaffected, simple life, with much kindness. We have, however, said nothing about the daily religious life of the villagers, for it is not very apparent. At the new moons, a considerable number, but by no means a majority, of women go to Tarn Taran or to a neighbouring canal to bathe,

in order to wash away the sins of the past month, and begin clear for the coming one. To the majority it is a mere form and rite; they are ready to acknowledge that they are not conscious of having been one whit helped to be better. A few there are who are devout and sincere in their performance of every rite and ceremony, believing that some reward will be reaped, even if they cannot understand how. We venture to believe that they are right, and that, by being true to their convictions, they do receive a present reward in a real satisfaction.

The chief places of pilgrimage to which the majority of our neighbours resort are in Tarn Taran itself or in that district, some devout ones going themselves, or by proxy, to bathe before each new moon. Lalkana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, is a popular resort for women, and Ram Tirath, a Hindu tank in the Ajnala district, is frequented by Sikhs as well as Hindus. The ashes of the dead, rich or poor, have to be carried to Hardwar, to be borne away on the waters of the sacred Ganges for salvation.

Besides places of pilgrimage, there are famous shrines, to some of which special virtues are attached, such as the gift of children, or cure from mad dog bites or snake bites. A few miles from Asrapur is a famous Mohammedan shrine, known as Pir Dahuri, to which people from the district and distant places come for the cure of mad dog bites. A piece of paper with some magic word written on it is given in a piece of *chapati*, to be eaten

by the patient, and sacred words are said over him.

The Sikhs are not a priest-ridden people ; they are too independent and sturdy, and their religion is singularly pure in its tenets. The infinite God is so present a thought that, in many devout minds, the greatness of the conception has paralysed the poor finite mind, and led to a gross pantheism. We see this even in the case of many of the religiously-minded women we meet, and mostly in the *Sadhnis*, the she-anchorites or religious women. Nor are the Sikhs so tied down by caste rules as Hindus ; their widows re-marry, and *Sadhus* and *Sadhnis* (holy men and holy women) of all castes may eat together and even intermarry. The women are allowed to go to public religious gatherings, and are not debarred from such privileges, nor are they kept in seclusion, excepting the wives of chiefs and rajahs. We find many enlightened and intelligent men whose spiritual apprehension is remarkable, and their response to spiritual teaching encouraging and helpful.

Two things, however, cause great difficulties in presenting to them a present everyday religion.

(1.) *A dim perception of sin, in any home application of it.* The theoretical knowledge of it is there, but it does not come home to the heart. The value set on life is small : “ Until a man has killed two or three, how can he be a Jat ? ” is a common saying, and a murderer is spoken of without any horror. We often see women in the villages, who, we are told, have poisoned off their

husbands or others, or done away with infant girls ; but the ordinary mind is not shocked or horrified. But if a poor woman were to leave her brutal husband, or a tyrannical mother-in-law's home, and their protection, then the village standard of morality would be greatly scandalised, and in most cases such a woman would not be taken back. The village has said it, and so it must be.

Lying and perjury are common ; an everyday expression is "As fast as one can tell lies." "How is your cough to-day ?" was asked of a patient. "It is very bad ; I coughed as often as one tells lies," was the answer ; and yet all acknowledge that lying is a sin. Bad language is a habit with all classes. "We could not digest our morning meal if we had not abused or slandered some of our neighbours" is the unabashed confession of some quite refined young women of our acquaintance. Of bribery and corruption there is no end ; it enters into every relationship of life, public or private. The poor young bride, when sent to her father-in-law's home, is laden with presents and jewellery, gifts that send her parents to the grave laden with debts which ever increase because of the extortions of the usurer. What are these for but to bribe the husband's people to look upon the young girl favourably ? Each time the girl comes home, she she is sent back with more clothes. All the local village authorities, are open to bribes, and those who give and receive them are never made to feel that they have done anything but right by their neighbours and friends ; there is no

public opinion against such corruption. We remember how, in the early days of the hospital work, a patient took one of us aside, and from under her *chaddar* produced a superior quality of brandy, pushing it into the doctor's hands, feeling sure that such a bribe with a Christian of any standing could not but find favour. When it was returned, she looked grieved at heart, and doubtless thought that had she brought a larger number of bottles the bribe for good treatment would certainly have found acceptance. Very few offer bribes now, but they are learning to bring in gifts for the hospital. It is usual, however, to hear them say: "Make me happy (well) and I will make you happier (meaning a gift)."

There is, however, in some relationships a great sense of honesty. In betrothals, if either party breaks off the engagement, it is considered a heinous sin; even if the boy has become an idiot, or disabled in any way, or profligate, before the marriage, the contract must be kept. The parents of the girl dare not break their word; public opinion in such a case is very strong. Also if some earnest money has been taken on some business transaction, be it only a rupee where hundreds are concerned, the man will not swerve from his word, though it mean a great pecuniary loss for him. We have experienced this in our dealings with local farmers when buying corn at wholesale prices during harvest time. A rupee has been given, but the corn has not at once been brought away from the field, and two days later, when the prices had gone up,



A SADHNI WIDOW GIVEN WHOLLY TO DEVOTION
AND READING OF GRANTH



SIKH SADHNIS, WITH CHILD AND SERVANT

we were able to procure our Rs.200 worth at the original price, because one rupee had been given as earnest money. In money matters large contracts are made and kept without a word in writing ; there is public opinion against such promises being broken.

To sum up, according to the consensus of caste and tribal opinion the unpardonable sin is the violation of caste rule. It is for this reason that those who give up their religion for another have to bear the utmost penalty of such a sin, because religion is really caste.

(2.) *Unlimited fatalism*, which we experience when we come closely in touch with the way of the village, and which the Eastern mind seems unable to shake off. An inflexible fate chooses the path of each individual and, reluctant or not, they must follow it. Its power is not only for this life, but extends to the life after the grave. To the Hindu and Sikh, faith consists in their belief in transmigration—a doctrine which enters more into their daily life than any other ; the very word they use denotes what they have brought with them from a previous existence to determine the present—*Para labdh*. It helps to create a certain kind of resignation, which may deceive us into thinking of it as a virtue, but it is the calmness born of despair. Grieving over sins or sorrows can avail nothing, joy will soon be turned into sorrow ; all, all is vanity—an illusion—a mere bursting of the bubble to lose itself in the “ waters of a great sea,” which takes no thought for the

momentary bubble lying upon it about to lose itself for all eternity. The prospect of such an existence as this—which is the best hope of a future life that the Hindu mind knows of—cannot but be wholly ineffective to produce any sense of responsibility for sin in the present life.

The religious life of attainment by works, or of contemplation of the Divine, is held greatly in reverence: for the majority, however, it is impossible, and especially for the women bound up in the round of their home duties. Religion is not a thing of the daily common life; it belongs to a higher plane altogether, nor has it any concern with daily actions. It is quite possible, in fact nothing else is expected, that the devotee should live as he chooses, only he must renounce all earthly ties. The *holy* life and *religious* life are totally different matters, to the ordinary mind, and yet, thank God, deep in the innermost hearts of men and women around us there is a real reverence for things that are good and lovely and just. The Law of God written in the heart, which the unrestrained passions of men have endeavoured to efface in every age, still finds acceptance, and makes the beauty of holiness to shine with a glory which nothing else can approach. It is to this inner law that we appeal, and in not a few do we find a soil prepared for receiving the seed of the Word.

Our Mohammedan friends in the villages are, on the whole, very ignorant of their religion, but what they know they hold with a zeal and tenacity

unknown amongst their neighbours. Theirs is a personal religion ; the person of the Prophet is a great reality to them and attracts their personal devotion and trust. The Unity of God is the central belief, and the most ignorant woman will view any other doctrine with unconcealed horror. She has a perfect trust in the mediation of the Prophet, why or wherefore she cannot say, as she knows little or nothing of his life or teaching ; but she maintains, with an unbounded confidence, that in the last day, at the Judgment, the Prophet will only have to say, " This one is my follower," and paradise will be assured. And the Prophet *will* say it of all who have fasted and prayed according to their Book, and for this reason we find many women, who put aside religion for the rest of the year, keeping the fast month and saying their prayers diligently. The *mullah's* wife generally conducts the prayers, for hardly any of the ordinary village women know the appointed prayers for the Faithful. Bigotry amounting to fanaticism we do not often come across, for in the village life Sikh and Moslem are so mixed up that toleration of each other is the usual thing. Now and then we come across villages where Moslems are not allowed to give the morning cry, which wakes up the Faithful to pray, nor are they permitted to eat cow's flesh in any form. Toleration in religion has created many mixed ideas ; we find Moslem women imbued with Hindu superstitions, amounting to idolatry at times, and visiting Hindu pilgrimages in company with their Sikh

friends. Charms, exorcisms, incantations are equally resorted to.

On the whole we find the moral life of Mohammedan women higher than that of their Sikh and Hindu sisters, due probably to widows being allowed to marry at will, and divorced wives to do the same. Fatalism is as common with the Moslem as with others—Kismet, or Fate, which is written on their foreheads as they come into the world, follows them into the life after the grave. We do not find many homes where there are two wives ; the villagers are too poor to afford to keep more than one wife, unless it is for the sake of children.

To sum up, the way of the village is not altogether hard on its women-folk, *if* they are able to take their full share of work ; but it is indeed a large IF that determines their happiness in this life. From the commencement of life the woman is handicapped ; there was sorrow at her birth, and, though she was loved and fondled, she was always looked upon as one who would soon become a stranger, and go out of the family life into strange hands. The fond mother perhaps lies awake through the nights on the roof, gazing at the brilliant canopy of stars above, wondering which of the stars, evil or benign, was the ascendant in her daughter's life, and whether there is a God above Who cares for the unsatisfied longings of the woman-heart, and why women are born into trouble and sorrow in this great world of His. Only a few short years and the little one is led away to

her future home in a blaze of jewels and colour, and to the music (?) of the village drums. She is torn out of her dear ones' arms, weeping as she enters the gay bridal litter, her sisters and companions singing the sad, pathetic songs of the "*Dola*," which is carrying away the friend of their childhood, all the sadder, because they know that so must *they* too leave home—and freedom. *If* in the new home she finds favour in the sight of her husband's women-folk, *if* she has health and strength to do all the work required of her, *if* she is obedient to all her husband's relations, never minding the taunts about her scanty dowry, the lack of love, appreciation or sympathy, *if* she never murmurs or complains of aught to her own kindred, and *if* her mission in the home proves successful, and she becomes the mother of children, one at least of whom must be a boy, her lot in life will be a fairly happy one—happiness such as she has been taught to expect, but not that happiness which is the birthright of every soul.

For the childless woman, be she rich or poor, life is a long drawn-out sorrow of unfulfilled hopes and a loveless existence. The constant taunts of her relations make her long for death, and though her husband may not be unkind, yet he cannot withstand the law of his race, nor the command of his mother, to take to himself another wife. The poor woman would gladly leave his home and go back to her own people, but they may be too poor to keep her, or her parents may have died, or she may not be allowed to do this by her husband's

people, as she is now the family drudge ; or she would gladly earn her own living and be independent, but she has never been taught to lead an independent life, and knows not how to begin. It is our lot to see many such women in the villages and in the out-patient rooms. "Pray to your God for me," said one a few days ago, "that I may be the mother of a son, even if I die from very joy of it." She was a happy bride once, but now is a brokenhearted, lonely woman, with no object or purpose in life, and nothing to fill up the blank in her existence. Unless she comes to Christ she will go to her grave weeping and un comforted.

There are other women who are not willing to bear their sorrows without a murmur, or an effort to get more out of life than their circumstances permit. To such an one, some ray of comfort or sympathy comes perhaps from unlawful sources, and hungering as she is—for the woman-need of love is life-long—she will go out of her old life and strive in a new one, to find solace at the cost of honour and a severance from her whole past. Had she been a mother she would not have left her home ; any hardships could then have been borne for the sake of her children, but without them she is as a small craft on the open sea with no rudder or compass to guide her. If life add sorrows and trouble to her instead of the solace she sought, she drifts farther and farther away, for there is no place for her where she will ever receive a welcome or kindness any more. A woman has but one chance

in this life ; one false step and even her mother will know her no more—she dare not—the village has said it. The younger the woman the more is the village scandalised at her conduct. Better for her, far better, to die by the hand of a man-relation. Even in these days there are men to be found so zealous for the honour of their women, so callous of their own part in the matter, that a husband will execute vengeance, such as the Mosaic law required, on a wife, or a father on the child whom he once fondled and caressed on his knees—and the Jat father is very tender over his small women-folk—a brother on the sister who had worshipped him with all the loving adoration of her childish heart, and even a son on the mother who bore him. And the village will only consider the deed a heroic one, and will do all they can to screen the murderer from justice. In almost every criminal case, but more especially in murder cases, the village is on the side of the culprit ; to evade justice is the proper course of action to all classes. And so the chapter of perjury and lying, false witnessing and bribery, goes on unendingly ; but mercy there is none for the one sinned against. Or if there is no such bold avenger, the poor woman herself may end her life by her own hand ; for what is the bitterness of death as compared with the bitterness of a whole life ? The darkness of the grave cannot be greater than the darkness which has entered her soul, and shut her out forever from the old home and friends.

Thus the way of the village lies along a twofold path: one in the sunshine, and only those who can add to the brightness of the village life may walk therein. The other lies deep in the shadows; in it the transgressors walk, those who have broken the laws of the village, the unsuccessful, the failures, the outcasts and the erring. But at the end it matters little whether the way has been long or short, sunshine or shadow, laughter or tears, for the terrible valley, the land of thick darkness, awaits each pilgrim. From the other side of the River of Death no message of hope has ever reached the wayfarers; for hearts waiting with a great expectation of something better, no gleam of glory has ever lit up the dark waters.

The Song of the River runs thus:

I hear the River of Death in the darkness,
Rushing so swift in the darkness.
For me, poor sinner, there's no Heavenly Oarsman,
My boat must be wrecked in the darkness.

The loved ones who would fain give comfort have no message of hope for the departing friend, but the priest is there, the one who is paid to make matters right with the higher powers. What a mockery of the eternal soul-needs is the prayer of the priest! The dying one is removed from the sick-bed, not allowed to spend in peace even the last few moments of a life which has been hard enough, but is placed on Mother Earth for *rest* and freedom from the torments of evil spirits. A flickering taper is placed in each hand, the parched lips are moistened with water from the sacred

Ganges, and the name of God is shouted into ears which are already shut to all earth's voices.

This is the *Best* the village can give—for the Great Father of all, Mother Earth—for the Sun of Righteousness, the feeble light of tapers—for the River of Life proceeding from the throne of God, the waters of earth which have never quenched any man's thirst—for the Song of Moses and the Lamb, the name repeated as a charm by sinful man to deaf ears. And if the pilgrim, passing out of the life which will know him no more into the Great Unknown, is conscious of anything around, and able to speak his last thoughts, it is only an eternal sadness of farewell, the only good-bye which the Child of the Village has learned :

The living, the living, they meet here only,
The living, the living, they love here only.
O words to be the best—For Life the Endless
And for Love the Deathless, be pitiful, O God !

SONG SUNG BY GIRLS IN THE MOONLIGHT

(To the accompaniment of clapping hands and a rhythmic dance).

Chand we teri channi
Tarian teri loh
Chand pakāwe rotiān
Tare kare raso.

Sas mainun kaddhe gālian
Gheo wich maida moh
Na kaddh san mainun gālian
Aithe mera kaun sune ?

Chāche da putr
Kol di lang gaya
Je wu hoyā apna
Nadian cher mile.

THE VILLAGE OF HOPE

O moon shed thy light,
 O stars your brightness;
 The moon cooks the cakes,
 The stars light the fire.

Mother-in-law heaps abuses
 While kneading dough in butter.
 Pray, do not so abuse me
 Here, who is there of mine to hear me?

My uncle's son
 Has passed along this way.
 Had he been my own brother,
 Parting rivers, he would have come to me.

THE SONG OF THE DOLA

(Sung by girls as bride enters litter)

Dole da wan purana
 Dhian da dhan māna
 Dhian mansi gayian
 Hun huin parāyan.

Hun ki dawa tera Baba
 Dawe karde lāre di bhai
 Pakar khaloti dole di bahi.

(*Bride joins.*)

Le chal Baba, le chal we
 Mainun ajj di rat sulakhi
 Ajj di rat mainun rakhin Baba we
 Subh di waqt mainun lorin.

Gahian un huin bhirian
 Angan hua pardes
 Hun tun vakh Baba ghar apna
 Main chalin parae des.

The litter is old and worn,
 Daughters are suppliants;
 The girls are given in sacrifice,
 They now have become strangers.

Where is your claim, dear Father?
The claim now is of the bridegroom's brother,
Who stands holding the litter.

O Father take me out again
Just for this one night's rest.
This night, dear Father, keep me,
And in the morn send me out.

The streets of my village close upon me,
My courtyard is now a strange land.
Now Father, you to your own house,
I go to a strange land.

BRIDE AT HER SPINNING-WHEEL IN HER HUSBAND'S
HOME.

Gaddian rah gayian tak wich
Hun mera nahin khedin di cha
Meri sath saheli wichhre
Mere nir dule dul ja.

The dolls are left in the niche,
I have no more wish for play.
My sixty girl companions are parted from me,
My tears keep flowing ever:

ANOTHER SONG.

Amman meri, de ghal de ghal ni
Meri pan patari ni
Khidu guddian ghallin wi.

Dhie teri kaun le awe
Tera baba buddha wi
Tera vir niyana wi.

Vir mera niyana ni
Nan tan ssiyana ni
Oh de nal, vir nun ghallin ni:

My mother dear, send, oh send
My threads and little basket,
My ball and dolls, now send.

Child, who can visit thee ?
 Thy father is old,
 Thy brother is but a child.

If my brother is a child
 The barber is wise ;
 With him send my brother
 O mother dear, send, oh send.

(Brother is supposed to arrive).

[Sings]

Mera vir gallian aya ni
 Te gallian huny sutaya ni
 Mera vir varh aya ni
 Te chand balra charh aya
 Mera vir varh aya ni
 Te chamba khilraya ni
 Mera vir ghar wich aya ni
 Te diwa lat lat bal aya.

Wag wag charkhea, meri ma de agge
 Hae mere Rabb, meri ma de agge
 Vir aya, amman da jaega.

Kach wich pera laya ni
 Te ro ro vir gal paya ni
 Te sui chuni pahiniya.

My brother has come through the lanes
 And by his steps has cleaned the streets ;
 My brother has come into the house,
 The moon shines with fresh splendour ;
 My brother has entered the room,
 The jessamine has begun to flower ;
 My brother is in the inner room,
 The lights shine forth one by one.

Spin on, O wheel, to my mother.
 Oh ! my God, my wheel, to my mother,
 The brother has come, my mother's precious jewel.
 In his arm he carries sweetmeats
 And on his neck the sister wept embracing,
 And red was the veil in which she was clad.

THE BURIAL DIRGE.

Death comes seeking, alas, for youth,
 Seated he grasps the foot of the bed.
 He does not let you breathe,
 He does not let you speak.
 Alas, alas, for youth !
 Alas, why are thy eyes upturned ?
 How did he die ?
 (God) upturned the eyes, he took the life.

Beds are spread,
 Other beds are light,
 Your bed is dark . . .
 Get a shroud of fine cloth,
 Clothe the fine young man.
 Four men lift him
 And carry him by stages.
 Night has fallen in the forest ;
 Go not into that darkness,
 There will be no returning.

Translated by YOUNGSON.

DIRGE FOR A WOMAN.

(Sung by the *Mirasan* who leads ; the mourners stand round in a circle, and beating their breasts wail out the refrain together.)

Death is certain, wife of the marriage bracelet,
 Death is inevitable, wife of the marriage bracelet.
 I saw thee first in the marriage palanquin, wife of the marriage bracelet,
 Go home now, thy time has come, wife of the marriage bracelet.
 The glory of the courtyard is the lady, wife of the marriage bracelet.
 The cotton skeins are left in thy basket, wife of the marriage bracelet.
 Thy cotton is forsaken beside the spinning wheel, wife of the marriage bracelet.
 Thy clothes are hung on the peg, wife of the marriage bracelet.
 Thy jewels are placed on the stool, wife of the marriage bracelet.
 In scanty dress, wife of the marriage bracelet.
 Thou hast gone outside, wife of the marriage bracelet.

Translated by YOUNGSON.

CHAPTER VI

BINDING THE STRONG MAN

THERE can be no question that the "Strong Man," as we find him around us, is armed with weapons of warfare which have stood the test of centuries of invasion. Religions have come and gone, the superstructure of the old faith has changed its front, but the foundation on which popular religion and everyday beliefs are built appears to remain unchanged.

There have been many reformations, such as Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, and various systems of ethical religions, but the mode of thought and life of the masses remains distinctly Hindu to this day.

The belief in metempsychosis or soul-transmigration is general ; nature-worship and animism form the undercurrent of myriads of lives, and even the followers of the Prophet are not free in practice from the effects of these beliefs.

Magic, witchcraft, omens, and the power of the "evil eye" are determining factors in the everyday life of the people, whether Hindus, Moslems, or of other sects ; even Christians who have come out as a result of mass movements, and have had

little instruction in the realities of the religion they have adopted, are very much in the same position of ignorance and superstition as before.

Caste in its practical effect is not limited to Hindus alone. Traces of ancestor-worship are to be found amongst the Hindus, Moslems, and Chuhras around us. Added to this is the fatalism of the people, which, strengthened by the creeds which they profess, binds them down and enters like iron into their souls.

It is not error alone which confronts us as a foe, but a sufficiency and bigotry which come from the possession of partial truths. Though we may look upon such elements of truth as having served the great purpose of ministering comfort to some of the needs of the human heart in all times, as well as of being that witness of Himself which God has given to all humanity, yet we cannot help seeing that in proportion to the light a religion holds it is antagonistic to those religions which bring a greater measure of light. Happily we do not find this in the case of individuals; for all who delight in God's will are ready to meet in friendliness others who are trying to serve Him and are prepared to receive the truth when they see it.

It is to such a foe that we—by comparison a handful of Christians, drawn chiefly from the poor and despised—dare to present our message, which on the one side holds a hope of the fulfilling of every human need, and on the other, suffering and even the loss of the things held most sacred and dear. None would dare, but that our weapons of warfare are not

earthly, but heavenly. Love, which is God's key to open hearts in all times and places, and knowledge, such as only the Spirit of God, the Divine Teacher, imparts, lay bare the innermost need and point the needy soul to the source from which all fulfilment comes. These are the means by which the messengers of the Evangel have conquered in the past and will conquer in the future, until the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of the Lord.

The love of God was shed abroad in the hearts of the Founders when they left the old paths to enter upon lonely and new work—that of finding out what goodness lay in hearts darkened by evil, and what germs of truth remained in the mass of error.

To do this they lived amongst the people, and, in order to get at the heart of the village life, they sought especially to reach the women by women workers.

It is to the zeal and devotion of millions of women that the "Strong Man" in India owes his power, and until they are transformed there can be no real advance in the religious or social life of the people. The women are all-powerful in the influence they wield within the four walls of their homes, an influence all the stronger, apparently, because of the limitations imposed upon them. Until they are desirous of light and knowledge and liberty, they cannot have that influence for good on their children and nation which is possessed by women in other lands. The Christian woman has a great message for her sister in the East; she must help her to realise

her position of trust and also to understand that the progress of future generations depends upon her right life before God and man. The "glory of motherhood," which is an essential part of their lives, has not to be taught, for the Indian mother is perhaps unselfish and devoted above all other women, but she has yet to learn that the real glory lies in having children who will rise up and call her blessed.

To women, then, the woman evangelist goes forth daily in the villages, seeking to know their joys and sorrows, their daily interests and difficulties, and to arouse in them some aspiration for things beyond the blessings of "sons, milk, and sound limbs and eyes." This is the only prayer that many women offer for themselves, and these are the only blessings they seek.

The evangelist's work is rewarded by the way their confidence is given, and by their readiness to seek advice or sympathy from her in their times of need, and by the unstinted love they give to any who will love and care for them. As a result of her work, in many a home poor women are trying under great difficulties to live different lives, and if they are not outwardly known as disciples of the Lord Jesus, their lives are acceptable as lights in a dark place. The Lord knoweth them who are His: those who have for His Name's sake departed from iniquity.

It is not the aim of the woman evangelist to pay a given number of visits a day, or to visit so many villages in the year, but to go where called or directed, and to spend as much time in a place, if the

way opens out for heart communion, as if there were none other to reach. She values those opportunities which bring her into closer touch with hearts—the birth of a child, death or other sorrow in a home, such as robbery or even the death of an animal, which often means the loss of the family's whole income. There is nothing too great and there is nothing too small to be an avenue from heart to heart.

The way of the Master was to preach the Gospel and to heal the sick. From the starting of the Mission the double ministry has been kept in prominence, and no sooner had the Founders settled into their new home and work than they cast themselves on God in prayer for helpers who would minister to the sick, and proclaim the love of God shed abroad in their own hearts by acts of love to suffering ones who lay beyond the reach of other aid. The hospital is an object-lesson in love ; it means, or ought to mean, on the part of those who have given themselves wholly to this service, love and devotion to the Saviour, with willingness to do anything for the least of His children, and a heart full of pity for the needs of the suffering body and the supreme need of the soul.

It is a message which reaches all classes ; the proudest and most bigoted are seen within the hospital precincts, lost in wonder that there should be a place where money and position can bring them no more of the physician's attention and care than is given to the poorest ; and when they hear of the commandment of the Master, that a sign of disciple-



HOSPITAL STAFF AND ORPHANS, ASRAPUR

ship is to love one another even as He loved, once again the Nazarene wins by reason of the love which is His great gift to His followers.

In the Asrapur Hospital, it has been the rule for every one on the staff, from the doctor down to the youngest nurse, to take a share in the spiritual work, either singing hymns or explaining pictures, if unable to give addresses. There is no separation of the two ministries, that to the body and that to the soul. Not only the staff, but other Christian residents take a part in the ward services. It is an education to the patients to see Christian ladies taking an interest in them, apart from the professional one, and in some ways it has advantages, for the teaching is not interrupted by the patients asking about their symptoms and diseases. The patients are surrounded by a wholly Christian atmosphere during their stay in hospital; there are no non-Christian servants or helpers about, and they see not only unmarried Christian women, whom they always look upon with envy, as being very happy and free from all cares and worries, but they see many married Christian women of their own class, and find that these, in spite of their burdens, can be happy and bright and useful even to those outside their family circle.

Sunday is a great day for the patients. As many as possibly can do so come to the Church of the New Birth, a few yards away, where the service is in Panjabi, and the hymns are given out verse by verse for the good of the congregation, which is mostly illiterate, so that they can follow it clearly,

which they do by various grunts of approval and clearly audible comments.

They always like to put their offerings into the bag or basket, and when someone in a remote corner has been overlooked, the congregation has occasionally been surprised to see a coin flying above their heads from the back of the church, alighting on the chancel steps for the pastor to pick up!

There are patients who love the Sunday services so much that, when no longer in need of treatment, they will come the night before and stay with us in order to be present; and there are some who never like to miss the services on Feast Days, such as Easter and Christmas Day, even when they have to leave behind them their household duties and children. It is very strange to see how Hindus of all classes, Sikhs and Mussulman women, who have never been to a service of their own, will mix with the Christian women in church, not caring to what castes they may belong. It is stranger still to find Hindu, Moslem, Christian, and Chuhra lying side by side in the wards, the one difference being that the Hindus eat specially prepared food.

What seems to impress the patients most of all is to see the Christian women workers, their fellow-countrywomen, belonging once to different castes, nationalities, and religions, now united in a close harmony of life and service. "How can you all live together so happily if you are no relation to each other?" is often asked. They come into such intimate contact with the Christian home-life here that the impression of unity and concord never

fades from their minds. As a result, some of them have joined the Mission themselves and are leading bright, useful lives, ministering to others where once they were ministered to.

But most mission fields to-day are inadequately supplied for healing the sick—this tremendous agency for making the work of our Lord a living reality. Large rural tracts, densely populated, where evangelistic agencies are few in number and feeble in influence because of the workers being spread over too wide an area, call loudly for medical mission hospitals, where the work is necessarily of a concentrated character and yet far reaching in its influence. We have counted in one morning forty distinct villages—many of them outside our district—represented by patients in the waiting-room when the address was being given. A village medical mission need not be—in fact had *better not* be—a monster organisation with the newest and most expensive equipment: simple blocks of wards, mud it may be, simple clothing and food, of which milk and *chapatis* form a good part, do not cost very much. The village people can be encouraged (and they respond far more readily than town patients) to give of what they possess to supplement the needs of the hospital, such as fuel, cotton-wool, and flour, whilst their relations come in most conveniently for odd jobs, such as stringing beds, pounding, grinding, etc. Patients' husbands are very helpful to us in buying stores for the hospital at wholesale prices, and conveying them to us free of cost. The question of fees has to be decided by

the resources of the people and their attitude to us. The best way to make the highest good of a medical mission evident is to urge that "Freely ye have received, freely give." We encourage gifts from people who have gained benefit, appealing to the best in them, and so making permanent the good work begun.

The gospel of the raising of mankind, for their physical and spiritual advancement, is the evangel which every medical missionary must present daily by word and life. And, thank God, the work which seems beyond human strength is His, and many of His servants find it still true that :

The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain ;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

WHITTIER.

The good Physician liveth yet
Thy Friend and Guide to be ;
The Healer by Gennesaret
Shall walk thy rounds with thee.

WHITTIER.

" A cry of pain " from the multitudes living in the villages of India calls for men, and still more for women, to relieve their bodily and spiritual infirmities. Far from any hospital, they are thrown in their times of need on such help as is given by quacks and ignorant persons ; precious lives are lost or crippled for life, and still more precious souls never hear a word to bring comfort or peace to them in their times of greatest need, when the

soul in darkness longs in vain for some ray of light and hope. In towns and cities there are agencies such as government hospitals for men and women ; the Panjabis are advancing so rapidly that they will now call in men doctors for their womenkind if ladies are not to be had. But in the villages, where eighty-nine per cent. of the population live, they are without help, not even a trained nurse or midwife, and yet village medical missions do not receive a proportionate measure of support and sympathy. It is not for philanthropic reasons alone that medical work is needed so greatly in the villages. From a purely evangelistic point of view the village hospital ought not to be overlooked in favour of one in a city where mission schools for boys and girls are bringing the coming generation under direct Christian teaching and influence, and where various other agencies for good exist. In the villages, schools are still in the background, and the best means of evangelising the masses are the dispensary and hospital. Out-patients come to us from a radius of sixteen miles and often farther, and in the course of a year some hundreds of villages are reached.

Furthermore, in rural districts the good work of a hospital might be considerably extended by a combined medical and evangelistic itineration. It has become a yearly custom now for all Asrapur—old and young, the medical staff and lady evangelist, the school teacher and the orphans under our care, the C.M.S workers, headed by our pastor and his

wife—to go out into the district. To the evangelist, who for years carried on itinerations from rest-houses, alone or accompanied by one helper, it is indeed a joyful sight to see the whole body of Christians going forth in the Name of the Lord to preach the Gospel and heal the sick.

This itineration now stands for the annual Asrapur Convention, and is a fruitful source of joy and hope in the work, and a means of drawing us nearer to each other in heart fellowship and united service.

We fix upon a centre where some district officer's bungalow or a rest-house is located, and get permission to occupy it and pitch tents around for the pastor and his party. The C.M.S. and C.E.Z.M.S. workers are like one family for the time. The women and the little orphans all live and eat together, which is a great help towards getting to know each other better, and sharing each other's interests, great and small. We begin the day's work with a service conducted by the pastor, at which all the Christian workers and domestic servants meet. The pastor gives helpful Bible readings and addresses on such subjects as how to present the message to non-Christian people, or on the Gospel as it is found in one of the Epistles.

After breakfast some of the party go to a house provided by the headman as a temporary hospital for the patients, who are far more numerous in camp than at Asrapur. A doctor, dispenser, nurse, and Bible teacher are kept busy for six or more hours ; sometimes the little orphans help in the singing of

hymns and explaining of Scripture pictures. Another party of four or five go out to one or two villages, and spend the day in visiting them from end to end, until the whole village has had the opportunity of hearing the Good News. The evangelist registers the names of those especially interested, or to whom tracts or Gospels have been given, for future reference and visitation. It is refreshing and encouraging to come across old patients and friends, in village after village, who receive the messengers gladly and offer them hospitality, and, what is better still, are found to treasure in their hearts some memories of hymns and prayers which they have heard in Asrapur Hospital, or at a previous camp.

One cannot over-estimate the importance of hymnology in the work amongst women, nor the impression made by the singing and teaching of such hymns, set to popular Panjabi airs, as hold the minds of the listeners and compel them to remember "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." For Moslem women we find it useful to begin by singing a psalm in the Panjabi metrical version; they recognise the canonicity of David's Psalms, and it gives us a good opening for enlarging on the prophecies contained in them of David's greater Son.

Long, long afterwards we sometimes find that the hymn-singing, perhaps to a noisy crowd, has been treasured in the heart of a village friend, to whom it has been as hidden treasure in her hour of need.

Another time, perhaps, we find some child who

has remembered a few verses and caught the familiar tune, and sung it to others until they too have learnt it.

Only the other day a village friend called on us with her little grandchild of three, a winsome little mortal. "Sing to the lady," the grandmother said; but the maiden was too shy, until the old lady, folding her little one's hands together reverently, began singing, and the little child chimed in with her pretty baby accent :

Praise the Name of Jesus, Sadhu,
Praise for ever Jesus' Name.

He is Lord and King and Saviour,
Praise for ever Jesus' Name.

Praise the dearest Name in Heaven,
Praise Him, angels, praise His Name.

* * * * *

Bring the drum, the lute, the cymbal,
Strike the chords in Jesus' Name.

* * * * *

Jesus left His Home in Heaven,
Just to save us—praise His Name!

* * * * *

Leave the sinful world, oh Sadhu,
Follow Jesus, own His Name.

Hear His Voice, how sweet, how tender,
He has called me by my name.

* * * * *

From "Hymns of the Panjabi Church (Dil Ruba)."
Translated by A.D.

There is much in the simple method of life we follow, when thus out together, that attracts the villagers to us. There is less organisation, and

therefore more unhampered time for work and a freedom from some of the formalities which are to most minds necessary evils. Every complex method needs organisation, but what a joy and refreshment it is to one's soul to be able to lay aside all conventional means and methods and our part in them, and to watch the Master work and catch hints of the All-wise Craftsman's art.

“ How do you begin when you first go into a house ? ” is a question often asked of workers who go out to sow seed in virgin soil. The usual method is to ask permission to enter a house for a talk on things which are of great importance in our lives and theirs. The permission is seldom withheld. We are invited to enter, a bed is placed for us, and a cloth spread over it if the people are very courteous, and we are asked to sit down, and soon have a crowd around us. The conversation is general at first, the children are noticed, and we seek to get into friendly touch with the women ; they, on their part, ask many questions which we try as far as possible to answer. This is not waste of time, as it gives an opportunity for observing and understanding the individual characters and for drawing them out into talk of a more intimate nature. The Panjabi women are inclined to be very friendly and unreserved, and soon they are telling us of their trouble or happiness, or perhaps asking questions about our object in coming to them, or our religion, caste, and salaries, or our relationship to each other. All this helps to show which of them are intelligent and interested, and then after singing and explaining a

bhajan (Panjabi hymn to an Indian air) the talk is led on to the deeper things of God, to the wonderful story of His love and tenderness towards men, to His hatred of sin, and His power to lead us into holiness and righteousness by union with Himself, which alone can bring rest and peace. We avoid discussions of a useless nature, if possible, but when deliberately introduced by some opponent, a Mohammedan generally, or occasionally a Sikh *Sadhni* (woman fakir), we meet it in a friendly tolerant spirit. It is useless in crowds such as these to touch on the evils of the various religions we meet, but it is always possible and helpful to touch on the special evils of the human heart, as known and recognised by our hearers. The conviction that sin is at the root of all sorrow and misery is often present, as also a desire for salvation from its ultimate results. But the desire for a present salvation from the power of sin is only met with in souls who have long been seeking after holiness in their own strength, and have only met with failure, until in despair they have sought outside their own religion to find One who will clothe them in His own righteousness. Whatever way the soul-need expresses itself, the messenger must be ready to respond, asking for wisdom from above to interpret the longings of the hearts, and to speak a word in season to the sore-tried, weary souls, and for knowledge to know when to be silent. And He who knows and understands the secret thoughts of each heart will reveal Himself in His own hour and way to those who are—however unconsciously—waiting for Him. As we avoid

controversies, so we avoid dogmas. To lift up Christ before men is to draw men to Him, as nothing else can. What we need is to learn how so to represent the Man Christ Jesus that He may become a living personality and reality, a Teacher, Guide and Friend in all the daily issues of life, as well as the true Master and only God and Saviour.

It is with great sadness that we leave these friendly women; it may be two or three years before that village can again be visited, though happily they can always come to the hospital in time of need. "When will you come again?" "Stay longer." "Spend the night here, and tell us more." "How can we remember when we so seldom hear these good words?" "Ah, how these words bring coolness to my heart, and while you speak I forget all my sorrows!" Such are the words we hear day after day, and in house after house. And yet, when next we see them and ask what they remember, the answer is, "Good words," or something equally indefinite and vague, because the teaching has not been followed up, and very few of the women can read, though of recent years we are glad to find there is an increasing number who can. If in a village there is even one who can read, there is much hope in leaving behind the good seed of the Word which will be read by her and heard most likely by others. The good time seems drawing near when there will be more general primary education, and there will be a new generation into whose hands the powerful Word will be placed, to work out that which He, from before the foundation of

the world, has willed and purposed for this great land.

The village visited, and sick people seen, the different groups of workers return for refreshment and rest, and the children are ready for a walk in the fields, which are resplendent in their brilliant greens, touched up by vivid golden patches of yellow mustard. There is nothing to obstruct the vision; a vast expanse of clear sky is visible all around, with a distant horizon line, along which may be seen the great towering snow-peaks of the Himalaya. The mud villages, almost the same colour as the earth below, dotted about here and there, are transformed into scenes of glory by the splendour of the sunset tints; the village pond is a rippling sheet of burnished gold; all nature seems to lie under the spell of a beauty not dreamed of in the earlier hours of the day, and the soul stands hushed and humbled to think that the earth, with all its sin and sorrow, is yet "full of the lovingkindness of the Lord." The days are very precious, and our experiences rich and blessed, as day by day we go forward to spread the news of God's plan for restoring sinful men to the position of sons of God. And when the happy days of united effort are over, we come back to our different paths of service with renewed bodies and spirits, and a larger vision of the need around, as well as of God's goodness in not leaving a spot anywhere without a witness of Himself; and somehow it seems much easier to look on the trivial round of common tasks as a God-chosen road to lead us and others nearer

to Himself. Another side of the itinerating work is the visiting and teaching of the scattered Christians.

The work of raising the depressed classes is a question which is at the present moment being faced by a large portion of the thinking population of India, who do not deny that the Christian missionary from the West has been the chief factor in elevating the poor outcast, when others have passed by in silence and contempt. Now they, too, are striving to give a hand to uplifting the poor, but they have yet to learn, from struggles ending in failure, that there can be no real progress or elevation until the inward man is renewed, and that the Christian missionary has only been successful according to the measure in which he has shown the constraining and uplifting love of Christ in his own life.

We believe that the acceptable day for the Chuhra and outcast is at hand, for do we not already see the same signs as the proud Romans saw in the early days of Christianity? Our Lord Himself gathered round Him the common people, and to the poor the Gospel was preached. It is the glory of the Christian Church now, as it was then, that, though not many wise, not many mighty and noble, are found willing to enter in, those from the highways and hedges come in readily that the house of the King may be filled. Yet our hearts yearn after those who are rich and have need of nothing, knowing not how poor and miserable, blind and naked they are. How often must He,

who wept over the lost day of opportunity for Jerusalem, sorrow over such because they know not their day of visitation, and in the pride of their abundance of earth's possessions are left desolate ! Truly we see all around us heavenly treasure being put into frail earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness may be of God.

Alas ! the Evil One is ready to rob the new converts of their riches in Christ, and unless those who are striving to enter in are shepherded with care, nurtured and built up, they will not be a real source of strength to Christ's cause. Many more teachers are needed, where there are enquirers and congregations, to give systematic instruction in the Scriptures, and to teach the young and intelligent to read. Women must be reached by women who, in patience and hope, will not weary of their pupils, who, if sometimes dull, are always warm-hearted and cheerful. The men must be helped to realise their responsibility as spiritual heads in the family life, the bread-providers for body and soul.

We have only to realise the position of the Chuhra in the village life to perceive that he and his family come into such close contact with the household of the farmer that, if only they are consistent Christians, the influence of their lives must be far-reaching.

Truthfulness and honesty, good hard labour given willingly, purity of language and deed, uprightness in money dealings, and a moral life shine as deeds of light in the village life, where bribery and corruption, foul speech, lying words,

hatred and malice prevail. But how can we expect such an entirely changed life from mere babes in Christ if they are not fed on the Living Word, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little" ?

We have known of some village masters envying their Christian servants on account of their priceless possession of joy and peace and contentment, and they have come to realise that in some things the servant is greater than the master. Far away in a distant village in the heart of the Jhang Bar colony, a young Panjabi woman of good birth used to go to a quiet field with a book under her *chaddar*, which she took out when alone, and as she was not a fluent reader she read aloud, stumbling over the words. The halting words were one day overheard by a Chuhra servant, an old man, who, in sheer joy and amazement, burst forth : " Lady, where did you get the Book from ? It is the Good News of Jesus Christ." " Ah ! " she answered, " I was ill in the hospital at Asrapur for many weeks, and I took lessons in Gurmukhi, and when I was coming away the ladies gave me the book ; it is good, but I cannot understand much of what I read."

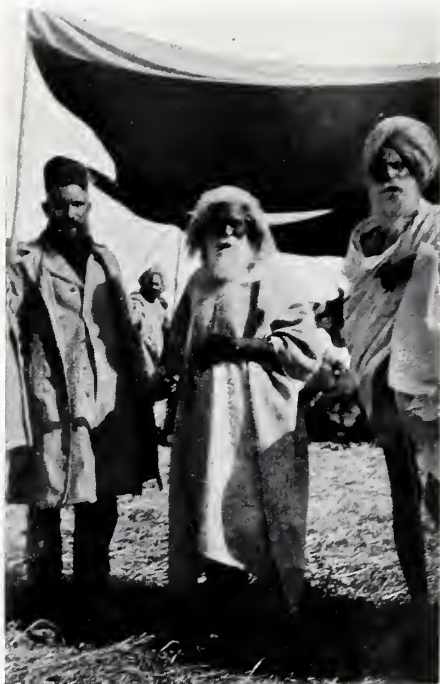
" Asrapur ! Bahrwal ! That is my birthplace where I received the new birth ; it is years since I have seen anyone from there, but if you read to me I can explain."

And so the high-born lady read aloud to the poor old Chuhra, who could not read for himself, but could make some of the meaning clear, and both

went away comforted. The story was told us by the old man, and we thanked God that, in ways we do not see or understand, He is making known His will to those who hear His voice and are ready to follow Him. It is one of God's miracles that the "Strong Man" is bound down by weak things made mighty by God's grace to the pulling down of strongholds.

In the work of preaching the Gospel to the poor the Founder did not forget that the message of Good News is for every man and class alike, for God is no respecter of persons. The hospital is for all classes: rich and poor hear of the love of Christ and see its fruits.

In the same way the Prem Sangat *Mêla* held at Asrapur—a gathering of people who desire to meet each other in love and concord—is another great means for reaching all classes, but more especially religiously minded people. The movement was due to the liberal-mindedness of a Sikh *fakir*, who opened out his soul to the Indian Pastor of Asrapur as a brother and friend, and invited his followers to do the same; the Christian messenger thus came to be known amongst them as a sympathiser in all things pertaining to God. The Pastor was often invited to the various local religious gatherings of the Sikhs (*mêlas*), and, wonderful to say, was often asked to speak, which led to personal talks with religiously minded men, and brought him into intimate contact with the leaders of the Sikh sects. The Pastor attributes much of the friendliness of the people to the work of the Church of England



BABA KESAR AT THE PREM SANGAT MÊLA



THE GATHERING OF THE PREM SANGAT MÊLA

Zenana Mission Hospital at Asrapur, to which all classes of women resort, in many cases being accompanied by their husbands, who have leisure to cultivate the Pastor's acquaintance and get into religious conversation, whilst the Pastor finds opportunities for personal service such as providing a room, or bed, or other comforts in a small village where nothing can be bought or hired—all of which helps to draw them into touch with each other.

The Prem Sangat *Mêla* at Asrapur is held every year ; it is known far and wide, and is attended by numbers of men and women from this and outlying districts. The chairman of the gathering is a non-Christian gentleman, held in good repute by his own people ; he maintains order, and sees that the rules of the gathering are not infringed in any way. There are no stringent rules, but those that are followed are mainly these : (1) To call each other, of whatever creed or race, brethren in the spirit of love. (2) To permit no controversy nor disrespectful allusion to any religion, prophet, teacher, or scripture. (3) Speakers may say what they believe, or have experienced about their own faiths clearly and frankly, but no comments are allowed. (4) Social questions may be touched upon, such as intemperance or other common evils. (Some speakers always mention the eating of meat as a sin, the same as intemperance.) (5) Addresses on sin and its remedy to be given according to the various lights of the speakers. (6) Singing of both Christian and non-Christian hymns to form part of the programme. (The singing usually is very fine ;

professionals come by the invitation of their own sects, but alas ! there are few Christian singers who sing as well as their non-Christian brethren, and the influence of Christian hymns suffers by comparison.)

A good number of Christians come in from the out-stations ; their sympathy, prayers, and personal presence are a great help towards introducing a Christian atmosphere into the non-Christian gathering. This is noticeable in the silence and reverence which prevail whenever a Christian speaks—quite different from that shown to their own speakers. A few Indian Christians, and especially one European missionary, have been used by God's Holy Spirit to elevate the tone of the gatherings and bring souls nearer to each other in the Spirit of Christ, and each succeeding *mêla* seems to bring this out more clearly.

The influence of these gatherings cannot yet be estimated, but what we see and hear is little short of marvellous, and we are constrained to declare that " It is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes." The results are manifest.

Prejudice and bigotry against Christianity and Christians are disappearing. All the guests who come are entertained at Asrapur through the kindness of sympathetic friends in England and India. It is indeed a great advance when Hindus and Sikhs consent to eat in a Christian village, even though the food is prepared by their own cooks. Greater friendliness is the outcome of discovering much common meeting-ground in hearts desirous for the things of God. People in the villages

welcome Asrapur workers and other Christians, and listen more readily than they used to do. Many are now reading the Word of God, and, knowing each other better, are not afraid to speak of Christian truths to their friends and in their homes, and the name of Christ is respected and loved by not a few. One great feature is that men and women come together to hear the same message, which is a step towards the realisation of family life. Some of the patients in the Asrapur Hospital, who have come to care about spiritual things through what they have seen and heard there, influence their husbands to come along with them to the *mêla*, whilst some men who are friendly with the Pastor and are interested in Christianity bring their women-folk along, and the children are not left out either.

Instead of men working only amongst men, women amongst women, secretly sometimes and in opposition to the men's wishes, at the *mêla* we find a whole family gathered together for two days at the same religious service. To one or two *mêlas* a Sikh *guru* has brought his wife and daughter and grandson with him, and all have taken a part in speaking and singing. The Sikh leader, whom the Pastor looks upon as the real, though unconscious, originator of the *mêla*, is a grey-headed old *fakir*, with a quaint, rugged face, and eyes that tell of a vision of the deep things of God. He is fearless, and not only reads the Testament, but preaches Christ at this and other *mêlas*. His affection for the Pastor of Asrapur is very touching, and he

considers that both are working for the same end. When he speaks, he often breaks into a sort of religious dance, his followers accompanying on a drum and stringed instruments, and his utterances are drawn out of him, as it were, in short ecstatic ejaculations, such as—

There is one Prophet.

There is one living Prophet.

There is one Guru.

There is one living Guru.

The Guru is not Guru Nanak. [The founder of the Sikh religion.]

The Prophet is not Mohammed.

The living Guru is one Christ Jesus.

The living Prophet is none other but Jesus.

And I, Kesar, am a son of that Christ Jesus.

So he goes on, and seems so possessed by the thought of the sonship or some great vision, as to appear almost unearthly, and no one opposes him at the *mêla*, though we have heard how bitterly he is persecuted at other times.

Christians meet others at the Prem Sangat *Mêla*, not only to teach, but because they feel they have also much to learn. Coming in contact with those who are living devoutly according to their own lights, the Asrapur Christians are learning the significance of the Master's words, "I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil," that there are golden grains of truth in every religion, and that a thirst after righteousness, peace, and God is the inheritance of all humanity, manifested in more or less conscious ways. To bring hearts together, there is the common experience of sin and sorrow and death, and

the universal experience, however dimmed, of God's goodness and tenderness over all His works. The Christians attending the Prem Sangat *Mêla* find more and more common meeting-ground with non-Christians, and are drawn towards them in a spirit of love and meekness, and are learning better how to represent that aspect of the universal Gospel which specially fulfils the needs of their brethren. The spirit of an understanding love is growing on both sides, and is making members of differing religions kinder and more longsuffering when they meet together in converse. Some inquiring minds have proved to their own satisfaction that the starlight, which has led men like themselves through centuries, and was better than darkness, is now fading away in the fuller light of the Sun of Righteousness, and they have become children of the light. At the time of the Prem Sangat *Mêla* we are specially filled with a larger hope for these non-Christian people of India whom a good Providence has brought so wonderfully into a Christian environment, and if God's people are faithful to their calling this great land ought soon to be leavened with the principles of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, and the message of repentance from sin, and full salvation be made known to all. Christian England, which has given much to India, has yet to satisfy the deepest needs of that land. Many more of her sons and daughters are needed to interpret to the people the meaning of the new life which is being infused into the country, and to show that true progress and civilisation mean the carrying

into practice of the Sermon on the Mount in the life of politics as well as of religion. If England is in any way neglecting her day of manifold opportunity, which she by God's grace has herself created, and if she contemplates the shortening of her gifts to this land, then the call comes all the more urgently to the three million Christians now to be found in India, who have been gathered into one family in the name of the Father. The Indian Church must take a greater part in the evangelisation of this country, though much preparatory work is needed, of a systematic and whole-hearted kind, before those who have hardly begun to walk can learn to run in the way of God's commandments.

How may this be done? There must be a more widespread knowledge of missionary subjects than now exists, and more personal touch with evangelistic work both near home and farther afield. The European missionary is amazed at the ignorance of Indian Christians on matters relating to the people and religions around them. It is a matter to grieve over greatly, but hardly to be astonished at, when one realises how Christian children are brought up at home and in boarding-schools, quite apart from non-Christians, whose influence at an early age is considered injurious by many parents and teachers. While growing up, they have had nothing but Christian surroundings, and non-Christian people are to them utterly strange and sometimes contemptible. A feeling of superiority is uppermost, and with it comes an intolerance of other religious systems,

and an unwillingness to learn about them. The work of preparation must begin in childhood, and must be done by Christian parents at home, and in schools by missionaries. There is hardly any missionary literature in the vernacular (or in English) specially for the Christians of this country, and study circles or missionary addresses for children are rare, and yet it is from the schools that recruits are to be expected for the various ministries of the Church, or for positions of trust and influence, where each true Christian may be as a thousand wielding God-given power for Christ amongst those who know Him not. It is in the schools that the parents of the coming generation are being trained ; to parents, teachers and missionaries must come the call for more united effort in the training of the young to take their part in the national life and to live for the greatest good of their people and country. All young India is being infused with a sense of nationality and patriotism as never before ; all Christian India might be taught to translate this spirit into " India for Christ."

Missionary sermons are seldom preached in our Panjabi churches with a personal appeal for anything more than money ; and few pastors seem to have realised that they are the natural leaders and instructors of their congregation in this as well as in other respects, or that it is for them to help the congregation towards a practical application of the Risen Master's last commission. Until Indian Christians themselves seek to copy their Saviour's life and sow His seed in the soil

around, Christianity will remain a foreign growth, and cannot touch the national or social life of the people. The converted people of the land can be the best interpreters of Christianity to their own countrymen ; if they will look upon this work as a sacred ministry, they may represent Christ in Eastern thought and phrases in a way few foreigners can.

What better proof of the power of the Gospel can there be than the witness of Christian India, drawn as it is from every religion, race, and language of the country ? Pantheistic Hindus, self-abnegating Buddhists, stern Moslem zealots, child-like Nature-worshippers, superstitious polytheists, cruel demon-worshippers are now bending the knee together to the Father of all, as they find Him in the Divine Person of the Son. That he who in any way loses his old religious life for Christ finds it more abundantly than he ever asked or thought, is an experience which is beyond all dispute. To non-Christians the thought of giving up one religion for another means infidelity, disloyalty, and irreligion, and the expression is, "Such an one has gone from religion into irreligion." Let not those of us who are gathered in from diverse religions give any foundation to an error such as this by an inconsistent walk, but let us show, in a more abundant and perfect life, that God's greatness, as He has revealed it in the Son, "flows around our incompleteness," and "round our restlessness His rest." If the Church in India would truly learn something of the joy of binding the Strong Man,

to bring him captive to the Master, it must go as the Master went, bound as a sacrifice to the horns of the altar, and bound with cords of love.

For Love's strength standeth in Love's sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most hath most to give.

1. Can I say how the love of Christ constraineth me ?
As the light to the moth, so His love constraineth me.
2. Can I say what to me is the light of Thy Face, O King ?
As life is to death, and as dawn is to night, alluring.
3. Can I say what to me is the touch of Thy Hand, O King ?
As life to the dead, and as power to the faint, assuring.
4. Can I say what to me is the sound of Thy Voice, O King ?
As the touch on the lute its echo ensuring.
5. Can I say what to me is the love of Thy Heart, O King ?
As a seal engraven on my soul enduring.
6. Can I know what to Thee is the heart of Thy slave, O
King ?
As a friend to a Friend is Thy Word reassuring.

Hymn of the Panjabi Church, translated by A.D.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION—THE ASRAPUR COMMEMORATION (1910).

“ON December 5th, 1889, the Rev. H. E. and Mrs. Perkins entered into possession of their newly built house on the banks of the canal, four miles from the old town of Atari. Five years later they were compelled to leave India, and just before the century closed Mr. Perkins entered into rest. But the foundations had been laid deep in prayer and intercession, and that same prayer supported the building up of the spiritual fabric even after the founders had themselves been withdrawn from the outward activities of the work. Now twenty-one full years have passed, and Asrapur has six hundred names on its baptismal roll. It was felt that while Mrs. Perkins is still with us, and keenly interested in all the news that reaches her of her old station, it would be a great joy to her, as well as no small profit to Asrapur's scattered family, if as many as possible could be brought together during Christmas week to render thanks to God for the past and to ask His blessing on the future.

“So the posts went forth to Clarkabad, to Montgomerywala and Batemanabad, to Dera Ghazi

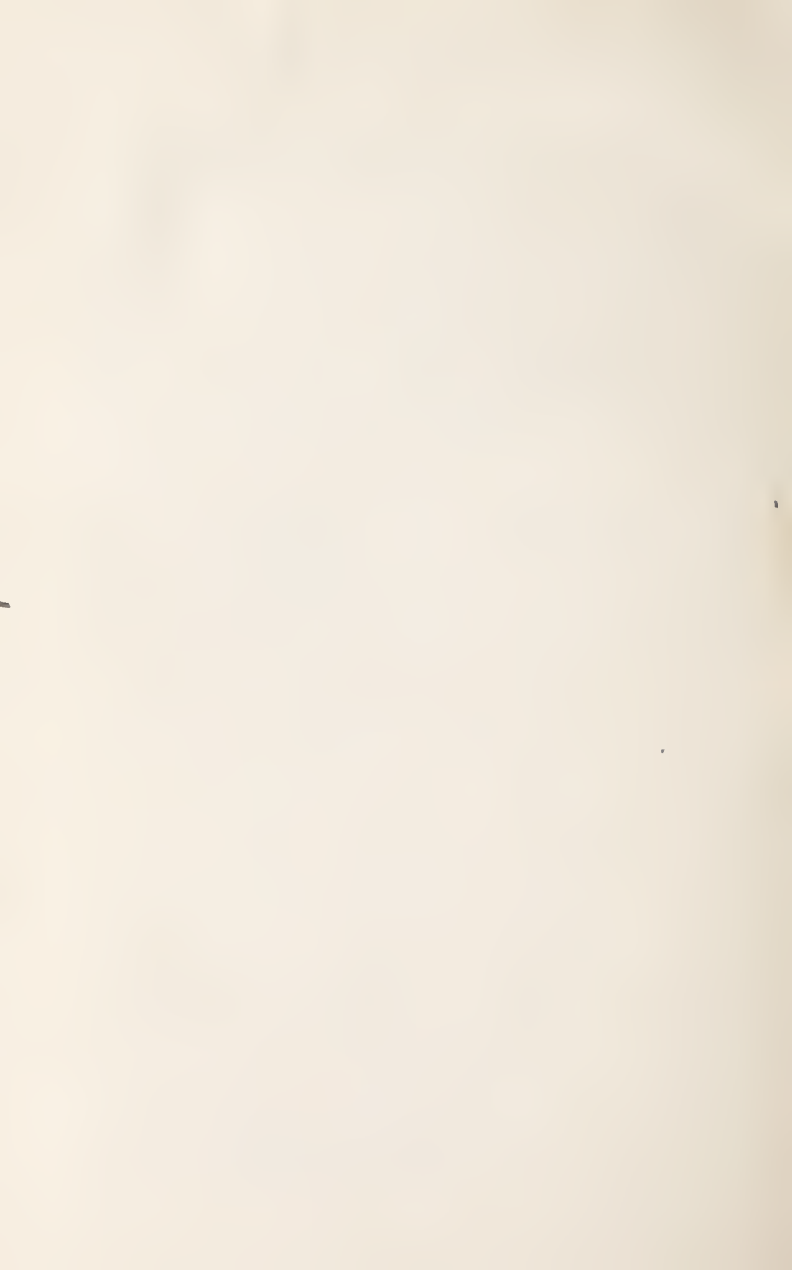
Khan, and to far-off Tank, as well as to various other nearer towns or villages, and *ba wapsi dak* (by return of post) in flowed the welcome acceptances from Asrapur's now scattered spiritual offspring. 'Yes, we will come indeed, and we will bring our children along with us, that they too may see our dear mother home.' Asrapur was full to overflowing with men, women and children, who spent Tuesday, December 27th, 1910, in the joys of reunion, and Wednesday, 28th, in the more formal programme of the gathering.

" 'Where there is a will there is a way,' and the whole of little Mother Asrapur denied herself Christmas treats and Christmas presents, and even Christmas dinner, in order to have the wherewithal to give a hearty welcome and six square meals to all her returning sons and daughters.

" Needless to say, under such circumstances, the thing was a splendid success. The one sorrow of the day was the very serious indisposition of the Rev. Wadhawa Mal, which entirely prevented him from taking his part in the day's rejoicing, but Miss K. M. Bose succeeded splendidly in supplying his place as far as possible. The church was far too small to accommodate everybody, so straw was laid in the church compound, and covered with matting and *daris*. Here at 11.30 was held the Thanksgiving Service, with a Te Deum, and a sermon by the Rev. E. F. E. Wigram on Hebrews xiii. 7, 8 : 'Memories of the past, duty in the present, strength for the future.' Then, after a big group photograph had been taken, we assembled in the same

place for reminiscences of the early days of the Mission. Mr. McKenzie started, followed by Miss Worsfold, these two having spent the very first Sunday in the bungalow with Mr. and Mrs. Perkins. Then followed a whole series of 'Sons of the Asrapur Mission,' some of them small boys in the time of Mr. Perkins, but each contributing something to the memories of his life there. Unquestionably the note struck oftenest of all was that of prayer—from Miss Bose's testimony as to how he would sometimes spend a night and a day in prayer before the arrival of a new fellow-worker, to that of some of his old schoolboys whom he would send out to the canal or under the trees in twos and threes saying, 'Lent is given us for praying more: go and pray, and come back after an hour or two.' Among the most pathetic reminiscences was one of Sain Ashiq Ullah's. Before he became a Christian he had suffered conviction of a year's imprisonment over some religious quarrel, but Mr. Perkins, then Commissioner of Pindi, who heard the appeal, quashed the conviction. Out of gratitude Ashiq Ullah was on the platform of Pindi station to see Mr. Perkins off when he resigned his Commissionership to undertake the preaching of Christ's Kingdom. And besides Ashiq Ullah himself, instead of the usual crowds who go to bid farewell to a high government official, there were only two other persons.

"After reminiscences followed dinner, in two relays, on the roof of the Musair Khana, and then came a gramophone which gave Panjabi songs; and later on a magic lantern, kindly provided by



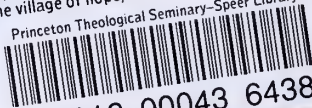
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